THE TRUTH ABOUT THE TSAR

AND THE PRESENT STATE OF RUSSIA

BY

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AUTHOR OF

"RUSSIA AS IT REALLY IS"

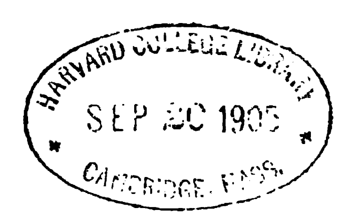


LONDON

GEORGE BELL AND SONS

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1905


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AUTHOR'S NOTE

SPECIAL information contained in this volume has been supplied to me by officials who are to-day in the *entourage* of the Tsar.

LONDON, *December* 1904

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CHAPTER I

REVERIE

OUTSIDE my window there was the tramp of feet in the creaking snow—a pause—and then in husky unison, which was not altogether free from a suspicion of strong drink, voices were uplifted in a hymn of praise:

> "Hark, the Herald Angels sing,
> Glory to the new-born King!
> Peace on earth and mercy mild——"

The singers, who from their voices I judged to be the men of the village choir, were evidently old-fashioned in their carols, or perhaps they had never heard of the "Revised Version" of Hymns Ancient and Modern. On that account I was inclined to forgive them for breaking in upon the quiet of the night, although it still wanted a fortnight to Christmas. But the words of the hymn, for better or for worse, struck me as vastly incongruous to the times; and as the voices came to a welcome pause at the end of the first verse, another aspect of the great Advent which they sang presented itself to my mind: "Think not that I am come to send

peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword."

Never, alas! has prophecy been more completely fulfilled, I thought, calling to mind the bloody history of the Churches, which have fought and torn, murdered and tortured in the name of Christ for close on two thousand years, and rejoice in the appellation "militant." But the Christian Churches have no monopoly of the fighting spirit, nor are they to be held responsible for the system of organised murder which has ravaged the earth from the beginning. Babylonians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Phoenicians, Medes, Persians, and Lydians all have practised the bloody trade of war. It would seem that cosmos and murder were the twin offspring of chaos. The survival of the fittest has hitherto meant the organised assassination of the weakest; and all religions and creeds have accepted the theory, and stand or have fallen by the power of the sword. Their very gods have been murderers—Ammon, Apis, Isis, Osiris, Jupiter, Neptune, Vulcan, Mars, and all the hosts of pagan heavens. The men whom the world has held in highest esteem, and whose names are written in red letters on the pages of history, have been for the most part men of the sword—men whose ambition and genius in the art of slaying have laid the nations prostrate at their feet. From Alexander to Napoleon is a far cry, but there are many accounted great before Alexander, and many since Napoleon, whose sole

claim to fame is based upon their aptitude for wholesale slaughter.

The strain of cruelty and the thirst for bloodshed are inherent in the sons of men. The peacemaker is derided as a faddist and visionary. But what was Alexander to Diogenes? Or what is Nicholas Alexandrovitch to Leon Tolstoy? Great actions as against great thoughts. Great ambitions as against self-effacement. And yet, as the world reckons, Alexander was a great man, and Diogenes a cynic in a tub—Nicholas Alexandrovitch an autocrat and great war-lord, with equivocal leanings towards peace, and Tolstoy a hopeless visionary.

The hymn of the "Herald Angels" came to an end, and the rasping cough of one of the singers, accompanied by a deprecating knock at the front door, gave warning that something more than passive resistance was expected of me. As if to accentuate the cheerlessness of their surroundings they struck up again:

"See amid the winter snow."

Instantly, in my mind's eye, I saw two vast hosts confronting one another across a river. The snow lay on the ground, and the cold blast of winter penetrated into the trenches and works which, like huge rabbit warrens, had been constructed by the opposing armies on the banks of the Sha-ho. Far away, to the south, a half-starved, beleaguered garrison held tenaciously to their battered forts, in the

face of repeated charges of fierce little yellow men, shouting "Banzai," as they dashed forward to certain death. Here were scenes "amid the winter snow" to which the eyes of the whole world were directed. But there is another side to it, inglorious and not less real, about which I reflected as I sat by the fireside and listened involuntarily to the carols at my door.

A few days before a colonel of the Russian army had been to visit me. He was a deserter from the forces of the Tsar, having no inclination to fight against an enemy who was no enemy to his country, nor for a cause which did not concern the honour and vital interests of Russia. He was not prepared to draw his sword in defence of the existing Government of his unhappy country, and therefore he had deserted. Numbers of his men, he told me, had also crossed the frontier; some to France, some to England, some to America.

"But the majority of the men who have deserted from the Russian army have not gone far beyond the frontiers," he said. "They are waiting to return to their homes later on."

I expressed surprise that the deserters should contemplate an action fraught with so much danger as returning to Russia when the war is over would of a certainty entail.

"They will return when the signal is given," he answered shortly; and as I glanced at his face my blood ran cold, for I knew what he meant.

"That means more bloodshed and murder!" I exclaimed, aghast at the thought.

"Yes," he said callously, "more bloodshed; but I should not call it murder."

I did not argue the point with him.

"And what will be the outcome of it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I neither know nor care," he answered. "It is not our fault. The Government should have let us alone; but since that was not to be, they will have to reckon with us later on."

"Then you are not a believer in Tolstoy's humanity?"

"No! a thousand times no!" he replied hotly, striking his chest with his clenched fist, as is the manner of Russians when they are roused from the lethargy of indifference by the heat of passion. "We will have nothing to do with Tolstoy's methods. There is no turning back any more from our determination. The Bureaucracy must go! Why do you speak of Tolstoy?"

"Because Tolstoy's philosophy stands for humanity, nobleness, meekness and righteousness," I answered. But even as I spoke I was conscious of advocating a doctrine of perfection to which human nature cannot attain. I felt in my own heart that there are, after all, things worth fighting for, and for which no man need be ashamed to die.

"Go back a few hundred years in the history of your own country if you want a parallel to our

present case in Russia," he said. "Were the rights of the Anglo-Saxon race acquired without bloodshed? Has tyranny ever burnt itself out? Are we to stand by and watch the flames devouring our country, and not raise a hand to quench them? That is Tolstoy's doctrine."

I could not deny the justness of his comparison; and my heart went out to the renegade colonel, who was prepared to give his life and honour in the cause of liberty. But I answered—

"Remember, he who takes the sword shall perish by the sword."

"Precisely, my friend!" he replied. "That is the law to which we appeal, and we shall not shirk the ordeal by combat. It is by the sword that Russia is governed—then let the Government perish by the sword. There is no other way."

When I had reached this point in my reverie I sprang up and threw open the window.

"Away with you—you fools!" I cried to the carol singers in the snow beneath. "What have you to do with 'peace on earth'? Go, sing your songs beneath the windows of the War Offices of Europe! Sing them to the Tsar of Russia, and the Procurator of the Holy Synod. Away! you idiots, with your Christmas carols—away, from under my window! For your songs are nothing but falsehoods, and your peace a mockery!"

CHAPTER II

THE PAST

WHY rake it up? Would it not be better to leave it to bury its own dead? It is a rank festering heap of infamy and corruption, I admit; but the midden of the present is not much more wholesome; and there are no signs of improvement for the future. And therefore, if we want to get an understanding of things as they are, we must turn over the muck-heap of things as they used to be. Otherwise our judgments are apt to be unjust, and our conclusions faulty. In examining the present state of affairs in the Empire of Russia we must take into consideration the influences of the past, and endeavour to trace the march of civilisation for the last century. We shall find that civilisation has been marking time in the dominions of the Tsars of Russia; and that it has been practising this unprogressive exercise since the Middle Ages. If only a Tsar could be found who would give the word "Forward," we might look for some improvement in the pace; but Tsars with progressive tendencies are as extinct as the dodo—if they ever existed. The lust of autocratic power is the inheritance of the Romanoffs. To concede a

point to their wretched subjects is a sign of weakness. In times of stress and popular agitation, as at present, concessions may be mentioned, but when the uneasiness is allayed by specious promises no action must be taken. The order is, "As you were," which might well be adopted as the motto of the Russian Empire.

Nicholas I., the great grandfather of Nicholas Alexandrovitch, succeeded to the throne in 1825, and forthwith established the policy which animates the Government of Russia to the present day. The dominant factors in this policy are the sanctity of autocratic power, and Pan-Slavism. In order to uphold the former Nicholas I. strove to gather all the races of his kingdom into one Church, of which he himself was the head; and thereby to exercise spiritual as well as temporal sway over his subjects. To this end he prosecuted rigorously all religions and creeds, in the hope of compelling the members of them to become Orthodox Greek Catholics. With fanatical zeal he massacred Poles and Jews who would not acknowledge him as the master of their souls as well as of their bodies. At the same time, as an inducement to all to embrace the Greek Church, he threw open the doors of the prisons for the liberation of all criminals who were willing to become members of his Church. In 1831, when the Polish insurrection broke out, he vented his fanatical fury on the heretic Poles, slaughtering impartially those who had risen and those who had not, includ-

ing women and children. In Suwalki, Lublin, Lithuania and Kovno, the earth ran red with innocent blood. The priests of the Greek Church incited their flocks to kill Poles and Jews; and prescribed as a penance for murder two days of fasting.

I have elsewhere* referred to the treatment meted out to the Jews by Nicholas I. in his efforts to convert them. In 1849 Hebrew children of the age of six and upwards were taken from their parents and sent to regiments in distant parts of Russia, where they were known as "Kantonisti" (children of the regiment). They were required to embrace the religion of the Greek Church and kneel before the Cross. With the little ones there could not have been much trouble, for they knew no better. But many thousands of the older children would not be persuaded to embrace the Christian religion, and suffered martyrdom, being horribly tortured and killed for their faith. That was the fate of thousands of Jewish boys in the reign of Nicholas I. The Hebrew and Roman Catholic girls suffered a worse fate, being handed over to the lust of the priests and soldiery. I have met old women in Russia who have vivid recollections of the days of Nicholas I., women who have suffered nameless wrongs and have been haunted with lifelong shame.

Such were the means by which Nicholas I. sought to enforce the doctrine of the divine right of auto-

* See "Russia as It Really Is."

cracy. His Pan-Slavism, which was the second string to his policy, manifested itself in the stifling of education, in a rigorous censorship of the press, and in the suppression of the languages of conquered States. The dream of Nicholas I. was of a mighty nation, shut off from the influences of Western progress, developing along its own lines. Speaking one language, acknowledging one religion, serving blindly one Tsar, whose word unchallenged swayed the destinies of the whole.

Nicholas I. died in 1855, and was succeeded by his son, Alexander II. Early in his reign Alexander showed signs of falling short, to a grievous extent, of the estimate which his father had formed of his character, when he spoke of him as showing "the true Russian spirit." For Alexander made some efforts to ameliorate the lot of his people. He emancipated the serfs. He reformed the civil and criminal tribunals, and he established zemstvos in the provinces. His intentions were, without doubt, good; but, unfortunately, the condition of the serfs under their new name is not one whit more enviable than it was before; the civil and criminal administration of the law is as corrupt as ever; and the zemstvos have become a terror rather than a blessing to the people. The reason for the failure of Alexander's reforms is to be found in the fact that he omitted from his programme the elements of all social reforms—education and enlightenment.

It was during his reign that Nihilism came to the

front as a force to be reckoned with. The iron hand of Nicholas I. had immediately crushed any symptoms of discontent, but Alexander was good-natured and anxious to propitiate the nation. He dallied with the reformers, and they led him ever further from "the true Russian spirit" which his father had predicted for him. When, at last, he realised to what length he was being taken, and that the more he gave the more was demanded of him, he drew back, and began to institute repressive measures against the extreme section of the Nihilists; until at last he fell a victim to those whom he had sought to placate, and Sophia Perovskaja laid him low in 1881.

Alexander III., who succeeded him, was a true Russian moujik by nature, a worthy descendant of Nicholas I. Ill-educated, he could swear like a strugovtchik, and drink like a fish. His manners were uncouth, and he would behave himself in the presence of ladies of the Court with all the *abandon* of a bargee. His courage was not equal to his bad manners. It was two years before he would trust himself to face the ordeal of coronation, dreading the fate of his father if he ventured out of his palace at Gatschina. He inaugurated his reign with M. Pobiedonostseff as Procurator of the Holy Synod, a post invented for that gentleman's benefit, and a wholesale slaughter of Jews in the South-Western provinces of his kingdom. Having thus made his presence felt, he proceeded to carry out the reaction-

ary policy which his grandfather had inaugurated; and Russia became a perfect inferno, which it would require a Dante to describe. He rescinded or annulled all the legislation of his father which leant towards progress, and left to M. Pobiedonostseff the congenial task of framing laws of oppression against the Jews and other undesirables. Education sank to its lowest ebb; and in the universities, polytechnics, and gymnasiums ignorant Russian professors were appointed to take the places of the educated foreign instructors who had hitherto occupied the chairs of learning. I was told by enlightened people in Taganrog that the rule of Nicholas I. was infinitely to be preferred to that of Alexander III.—and they had experienced both.

It was in the reign of Alexander III. that young Russians first began to migrate to foreign universities for education, and to acquire there the lessons which were to make them dangerous enemies to the peace of their country.

It was Alexander III. who gave utterance to the famous words: "Jalka, Jalka chto Nicholai speet!' (what a pity that Nicholas sleeps!), and the circumstances were as follows: The massacres and persecutions of the Jews had reached a climax. The civilised world, and a good many Russians as well, were aghast at the infamies which were perpetrated on the unfortunate Hebrews. A certain noble lady ventured to remonstrate, or rather to supplicate, the Tsar on behalf of the Jews; and he, calling to mind

the implacable hatred of his grandfather and his own efforts to follow in his footsteps, gave vent to the now famous phrase.

He reverted absolutely to the ideal policy of Nicholas I., with its two outstanding features, namely, the sanctity of autocracy, and the Pan-Slavonic doctrine: One language—one religion—one Tsar. The Poles, Finns, and Jews suffered under his rule as no other subject nation has ever suffered. The Polish language was suppressed, and education was denied to all but a trifling percentage. The liberties which Finland had enjoyed for centuries were revoked, and the Orthodox Church instituted a Holy Inquisition in the unhappy country. The fate of the Jews I have dealt with at some length in "Russia as It Really Is," and I shall not refer to the subject again here.

Such were the traditions which Nicholas II. inherited, along with the throne of his ancestors, in 1894. I have given this slight sketch of his predecessors because the only excuse for Nicholas II is to be found in the influence of heredity. The son of Alexander III. and the great grandson of Nicholas I. cannot be expected to escape a strain of cruelty and obstinacy. I make the acknowledgment gladly, for what it is worth.

Though I have met Nicholas Alexandrovitch on my travels in and out of Russia I do not claim on that account to be in a position to speak on my own authority of his personal characteristics, as

certain people do who have been honoured with an Imperial hand-shake and a cigarette. The knowledge which I have of the Tsar of Russia has been derived from officials in the Tsar's service, and others whose business has brought them into contact with his Majesty.

As to his personal appearance, he is spare and short in stature, with narrow shoulders, and he has none of the outward characteristics of his father or grandfather. Like most little men he is highly endowed with self-importance. So much for his general appearance. We have heard a great deal lately of his character as a man and as a monarch, and but little more remains to be said. He is not remarkable for physical or for moral courage, and he lives in a perpetual state of nervous anxiety. On one occasion, when he was driving through the streets in an open carriage, a little girl, bravely decked out in all her best clothes, threw a bouquet of flowers into the carriage. A certain general officer, who was seated by him, had to fish Nicholas up from the bottom of the carriage; but not before he had convinced him that they were very fine flowers indeed, and quite harmless. It was some time before he recovered from the shock to the system which this incident caused; whilst the newspapers of the whole world announced extensively "Attempted Assassination of the Tsar." The officers of his bodyguard, some of whom are known to me, are still laughing in their sleeves at the joke.

But the general who played the part of rescuer is no longer in St. Petersburg. He was given a post in a distant Government, where he is not perpetually brought face to face with his Imperial Majesty.

The grand visit which Nicholas II. paid to France a few years ago was a period of severe strain both to himself and to his gentlemen-in-waiting. So long as he was at sea Nicholas was happy enough; but his troubles began when he landed in France. He was very far from happy whilst he was in Paris, though the newspapers had a great deal to say about his magnificent entry in state. But the newspapers did not tell their readers what his gentlemen-in-waiting had to undergo. Twice a day he received absolution from his chaplain. In his clothes was concealed a small piece of garlic, as a talisman against the plots of his enemies. A pope of the Orthodox Church used to lick his left eye twice a day as a preventative against the machinations of the Nihilists. No one but Baron Freedericksz knows the extent of the misery which he suffered until he returned to Russia again. Even when he was in England there was always a haunted look in his eyes, which was remarked by all who saw him. But we are a charitable nation, and our newspapers attributed the uneasy bearing of the Tsar to modesty! Indeed, of such a retiring disposition was Nicholas II. when he was in this country, that when he paid a visit to the house of a private individual all the inmates of the household, including servants and

guests, were inspected and cross-examined by detectives before his arrival, to ensure that no person had smuggled himself into the house who might shock the modesty of the august monarch.

Another attribute which has been imputed to Nicholas Alexandrovitch by a section of the press in this country is humanity. We are being told perpetually of his "humane intentions," and the Peace Conference at the Hague is trotted out as evidence of the truth of the assertion. There are, then, according to his admirers in Great Britain, two virtues which stand out pre-eminently in the character of Nicholas II.—modesty and humanity. Is it permissible to inquire to which of these virtues certain of his public acts have been due?

It was, of course, modesty that prompted him to summon the nations to a conference at the Hague. And it was humanity which impelled him to force Japan into war. But was it modesty or humanity which urged him on to complete the Russification of Finland, and to appoint General Bobrikoff as the instrument of his will? To which of these virtues are we to ascribe the massacre of Kishineff, and the fiasco which followed at the trial of the murderers? Knowing his own weakness, it is to be presumed that modesty was at the bottom of the appointment of M. de Plehve as Minister of the Interior. But was it for reasons of humanity that he drove that good man and capable Minister, M. de Witte, from his post? It was modesty which made him pledge

his word to retire from Manchuria; but was it humanity that made him break it? If so, he is scarcely justified by the results. Then again it is difficult to classify the massacre of Blagovestchensks under either of these virtues. Then as regards the flogging of women in his dominions—are we to ascribe the practice to modesty, or humanity? On the day of his coronation three thousand people were crushed to death in the Khodiniskoje field in Moscow, was it humanity which made him attend the Ambassador's ball the same evening?

If these things constitute modesty and humane intentions, then I say that Nicholas Alexandrovitch is the most modest and the most humane monarch in the world.

CHAPTER III

THE PRESENT

THE civilised world, for reasons of sentiment or of policy, looks with favour on Nicholas Alexandrovitch and the present form of government in Russia. Generally speaking the civilised world is a snob, and dearly loves the autocrat; and of no countries is this more true than of those which possess a democratic form of government. That is the reason why we hear so much fulsome nonsense about the enlightened reforms which the Tsar is reported to be introducing in Russia. The pious aspirations of Nicholas II., as expressed from time to time by promises of amelioration of the lot of the downtrodden masses of his empire, find their way into the columns of the foreign newspapers, and excite the editors to glowing comments. The philanthropic reader lifts his eyes to heaven and murmurs a comfortable, "Thank God!" The intimate tone of the article which he has read makes him feel that the Tsar is, after all, a very good fellow, and that he himself would have done very little better had he been Tsar of All the Russias.

But what have all these "reforms" amounted to

during the ten years of Nicholas II.'s reign? Or, in what respect are the people of Russia better off under the present *régime* than they were under Nicholas I.? There is no reform in Russia, nor will there be until the right moment arrives. I have already pointed out that the liberation of the serfs was a mockery, and that the Zemstvos, having become a terror to autocracy and bureaucracy, were reduced to impotence in so far as their representative faculties were concerned, by being handed over to the control of the governors and officials. That the Zemstvos have shown marked activity of late is a matter about which I shall have something to say later. My intention in referring to them here was merely to point out that, as a means of raising the social status of the people, the Zemstvos have hitherto been useless. As to the rest, in spite of gracious promises, the knout descends with regularity upon the bare backs of the moujik and his wife. Prisoners are still condemned without trial, and maltreated and shot down on their way to penal settlements. The fact that the railways are urgently wanted at present for the transport of troops and stores to Manchuria has increased the miseries of the unfortunate prisoners, who are now frequently kept immured in dungeons until they are on the verge of starvation and madness. Liberty, Justice and Mercy, are as unknown in Russia to-day as they were under Nicholas I. Bribery and corruption, savage cruelty and oppression, are still rampant in the land.

Here are a few examples of the existing state of affairs: On October 24 in Saratov twelve girls were outraged by soldiers. The fathers of the unfortunates complained to the authorities; but the soldiers are still wearing the Tsar's uniform, whilst the parents of the children have disappeared, and it is not known what has become of them. On November 5 in Suwalki nine Hebrew homes were destroyed, two men were killed, and one young woman is missing. Up to the present no investigation has been held concerning the affair by the police. On November 19 in the Government of Mogileff, a party of moujiks assembled and attacked the Jewish quarter, and carried off all that they could lay hands on. One woman, who was ill in bed with a child by her side, cried out for help. A moujik hearing her cries picked up a heavy *samovar* and hurled it at her, killing her instantaneously.

As regards the treatment of prisoners the following episode, which took place in the autumn at Gerbinskaya, on the borders of Yakutsk, is instructive. An officer of the name of Sirkorsky was in charge of a convoy of prisoners which left Alexandrovsk for Yakutsk at the end of May. He behaved towards his party with insulting arrogance; he was frequently drunk, and used to annoy the girls of the party with his loathsome attentions. At the halting station Manzurskoje, the "politicals," irritated beyond measure by the petty tyrannies to which they were subjected, attempted to resist his persecutions,

but were quickly reduced to submission by the clubbed rifles of the escort. They were then bound hand and foot and thrown into the carts in which they were carried to the next halting station. There was another outbreak among the "politicals" a few days later, when one of them was wounded and also a girl, who received a bayonet thrust in the arm. Meanwhile the conduct of Sirkorsky towards the women was becoming more insufferable. He made a dastardly attempt to violate one of them; but she escaped. The prisoners then decided that they must guard the women at night; for which purpose they secretly obtained arms, and mounted a guard over the women's quarters. At Gerbinskaya Sirkorsky sent two soldiers to bring R. W. (the girl whom he had previously assaulted) to him by force. In the event of resistance on her part the soldiers were to strip and beat her, and then to bring her to him; if any resistance were made by the "politicals," the soldiers were ordered to shoot the lot! The two soldiers repeated their orders to the non-commissioned officer and the men of the escort, and it was decided that Sirkorsky's order was not to be obeyed. When this decision was made known to Sirkorsky he said nothing and went to bed. Later in the night, however, he got up and attempted to force his way into the women's quarters of the boat—the convoy was now proceeding by water—when the "political" Mark Minsky, who was then on guard outside the partition, fired at Sirkorsky with a re-

volver and shot him dead. One of the escort fired at Minsky, slightly wounding him. The firing roused both the "politicals" and the whole escort. The soldiers lost their heads, and began an indiscriminate fusillade, which was stopped by the sergeant after one "political" named Schatz had been killed. A fortnight later the convoy arrived at Yakutsk under the command of another officer; and Minsky is now awaiting trial.

Incidents such as these are happening daily in Russia in spite of the fact that de Plehve is no more, and Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky occupies the chair of the Minister of the Interior. The appointment of the new Minister was hailed with delight in certain Russian newspapers which have developed of late wonderfully liberal views. But before accepting the appointment of Prince Mirsky, and the outburst of liberalism in the Russian press as signs of regeneration, let us consider the conditions under which they have been sprung upon the world.

The war with Japan had humbled Russia in the dust of defeat, and had absolutely discredited the Government in the eyes of all enlightened Russians and of the rest of the world. Dissatisfaction at home and loss of prestige abroad confronted the Tsar and his Bureaucracy with menacing looks. The spirit of discontent in Russia was manifesting itself in acts of violence, in desertions from the army, in an undefined air of unrest throughout all classes. The national calamities in Manchuria were uniting

all shades of liberalism, socialism, and nihilism into a compact body of opposition to the existing state of things. Then came the bomb which shattered de Plehve; and the Tsar was forced to look out for a new Minister of the Interior. He chose Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky—a man who is popularly supposed to hold liberal-minded views; and with his appointment the Russian press broke out into candidly expressed liberal opinions, which certainly would not have been tolerated a year ago. But it is worthy of note that under the new era, which the press heralded with acclamations, there has been no improvement in the condition of the people, nor in the administration of justice, nor in the treatment meted out to the prisoners, nor in the spread of education, except that now five per cent. of the students at the girls' school in St. Petersburg are allowed to be of Hebrew race instead of three per cent. A few of the quite harmless exiles have been allowed to return from Siberia—but only a few. Of words there has been a gallant display—of deeds an almost entire absence.

The obvious meaning of the appointment of Prince Mirsky is that Nicholas II., fearing the coalition of the various sections which constitute the forces of discontent, chose for the post of Minister of the Interior a man whose known, or supposed, liberal tendencies would pacify the moderate liberals and thereby disperse the gathering storm-clouds of revolution.

The sudden flood of liberal literature is attributable to the same cause; and it is also meant to advertise to the world the liberal mind of Nicholas II., who allows his editors to write just what they please, like any other enlightened monarch. But as a matter of fact, the editors of the leading Russian journals are writing to order to-day just as much as they did a year ago, or have done for the last century. Alexai Sergevitch Suvorin, the proprietor and editor of the *Novoe Vremya*, is a mere tool of the Tsar, and one of the worst Jew-baiters that Russia has ever possessed. If I were asked to decide between de Plehve and Suvorin I would have chosen the former. For de Plehve took a pride in his bloody work and did it openly; whereas Suvorin is as cunning as he is old in years and infamy, and strikes in the dark.

Ossip Constantinovitch Natovitch, the proprietor and editor of the *Novosty*, is a scholar and a gentleman; but he labours under the disadvantage of being an editor in Russia. But it matters very little who are the proprietors and editors of the various journals in Russia, since they all alike, irrespective of race or creed, ability or disability, come under the ban of the censor, and are controlled by him. Dangerous trades in our country are subject to inspection; in Russia printing is regarded as the most dangerous trade of all, and it is subjected to the closest surveillance. Now for all practical purposes the press censor in Russia is Nicholas Alexandro-

vitch, and therefore my readers can judge for themselves what value is to be attached to the "information" which Russian newspapers supply. That the outcry for reform in the Russian press of to-day is a "put up job" is clearly indicated by the fact that it would be impossible for the editors of the various newspapers which are agitating in the matter to publish their articles without the permission of the censor. It is not to be supposed that a large section of journalists in Russia would suddenly and simultaneously defy the censor, and publish matter which, a year ago, would certainly have secured for them a long term of banishment to Siberia. And if the agitation is sincere, why do the journals which cry out for reform remain silent concerning the crimes that are daily being committed by the Bureaucracy and the officials? Why, if the censorship of the press has been abolished, are foreign newspapers in Russia still subjected to the blacking-out process, by which all important news concerning the government of that country is deleted from their pages? There is no doubt in my mind that the appointment of Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky as Minister of the Interior and the agitation in the press for reform are both attributable to the desire of Nicholas Alexandrovitch to alienate the sympathies of the moderate liberals from the revolutionary party, and to impress the world at large with the excellence of his intentions. But we have seen Nicholas Alexandrovitch pose too often before to be taken in by his

specious attitude. Let him concede but one genuine act of grace to his people, and we will believe in the sincerity of his good intentions. But so long as he promises and does not perform he must not expect even a nation of the credulity of Great Britain to take his bogus reforms seriously.

In addition to the ordinary restrictions and annoyances to which the subjects of the Tsar are at all times liable, a fresh terror has arisen since the outbreak of the war. The whole country is infested with spies and blackmailing officials, who visit the houses of the richer classes and demand money, with threats of denunciation if it is not forthcoming. The Poles, Finns, and Jews are, of course, the worst sufferers. An official spy will make his appearance one day at the home of some merchant or tradesman, and warn him that he will report him to the Governor as an enemy of the Tsar unless he receives pecuniary satisfaction. To another he will declare that he saw him at a secret meeting, and that it is his duty to make a report to the Politzmaister; but that the matter can be arranged by payment. The unfortunate victim knows only too well that the blackmailer is a Government official, and that therefore his word will be accepted regardless of any protest which he may make to the contrary. He is therefore compelled to pay hush-money for offences which he has never committed, or take his chance of deportation to Siberia.

For the rest the old order of things continues.

Students are daily banished to unknown destinations without cause and without trial. Official and judicial corruption are rampant. Ignorance is fostered, and the fear of the Orthodox Church is over the people. There is no real change and no real improvement in the present state of Russia, and there will be none so long as Autocracy and Bureaucracy flourish.

CHAPTER IV

PUBLIC OPINION

"PUBLIC opinion," said Plato, "is a medium between knowledge and ignorance." In other words, public opinion is the average of private opinions. That does not pretend to be nearly such a good definition as Plato's, but it will serve, since it demonstrates that without the expression of private opinion public opinion could not exist. It is also a medium between tyranny and liberty; inasmuch as tyranny stifles opinion, and liberty gives it full scope and honour. Of late we have read much in the press concerning Russian public opinion, and being a nation which regards freedom of thought and expression as essential to existence, it does not occur to the average Britisher to deny to Russia the privileges which he enjoys. But what is Russian public opinion? The personification of it in our country is "the Man in the Street," in Russia it is Nicholas Alexandrovitch.

The Tsar has a Senate, a Ministry, and heads of every Ministerial Department. But who elects them? The people? Certainly not. They are appointed by "Public Opinion Nicholas," and dis-

charged at his bidding. Ministers of State, Governors of Provinces, officers of the Army and Navy, Commissioners of Police, doctors of Medicine, doctors of Law, collectors of Revenue, priests of the Church are all made and unmade by Nicholas Alexandrovitch. So long as they conform to "public opinion" as he understands it, they are allowed to remain; but let them express views of their own which are at variance with "public opinion," and out they go. The honour of the country, the decision of peace or war, the doctrines of the national Church, the fiscal policy, are all settled in Russia by "Public Opinion Nicholas." By means of the press, as we have seen, he controls the minds of his subjects, and tells them what they are to think—if they think at all. He arranges, through the same channel, that they are not told things which it would not be good for them to hear. Where one or two are gathered together for private discussion on matters of public weal, there are his spies in the midst of them, and his Cossacks round about. The expression of a private opinion in public is a crime, for "public opinion" is sacred and must not be gainsaid.

Since, therefore, the Tsar knows what is good for all his people, and takes upon himself the whole burden of their thoughts, it is interesting to observe along what courses "public opinion" in Russia is directing public life. The religious life, for example, furnishes an object-lesson. There is a great deal

of church-going in Russia; the people are devout, and their nature predisposes them to piety and submission to the Divine Law. Here all the elements are in favour of Nicholas Alexandrovitch; but the results are not flattering to "public opinion." But he manufactures saints for them. He who was once plain moujik Gregorevitch becomes "St. Gregor"—the drunken pope may some day figure as "St. Ivan." Who can say but that in the course of time we shall not have a "St. Plehve," and a "St. Bobrikoff"? A great deal depends on whether the body decomposes in the grave or not in a given number of years. There may be other signs by which "public opinion" knows a saint when he sees one; but the time test is the only one I know.

The law in Russia is similarly amenable to "public opinion." To be a lawyer in Russia is no sinecure, for the Tsar can make and unmake laws at his pleasure. What is right to-day may be wrong to-morrow; and the unfortunate lawyer has to keep pace with all the "ukazes" which an enlightened "public opinion" chooses to issue. Consequently, there is no great confidence in the law.

Seeing that religion and legislation are entirely controlled by "public opinion" in Russia, it is only natural that the same force should single out the men who have deserved well of their country for decorations and rewards. It was "public opinion" who bestowed honours and promotion upon Prince Obolensky for flogging peasants and their wives

when he was Governor of Kherson, and showed his appreciation of his services by appointing him Governor-General of Finland, in the place of the late lamented Bobrikoff. It was "public opinion" who decorated Colonel Gribsky for the humanity which he displayed at Blogovestchensks, when some 15,000 Chinese were murdered by his orders. M. Pobiedonostseff, too, has to thank "public opinion" of four generations for the countless stars and orders which he is entitled to wear.

There was once an occasion when I myself came very near to receiving recognition from "public opinion" in Russia. It happened thus: Some years ago there was famine in Russia, and a large number of the poor were on the brink of starvation. The crops were a failure, and the people in the country were dying before help could reach them. I was in America when the news of the appalling state of the peasantry in Russia became known. Famine relief funds were immediately raised both in Great Britain and America, and ships laden with wheat were despatched for the starving people of Russia. I found myself on one of these ships, racing our comrades and death across the Atlantic. We arrived at last at a certain Russian port, and began at once to discharge our precious cargo. The day after our arrival it was notified to us that the Tsar had expressed his intention of thanking us in person. When I heard that I told the captain that I must leave at once for Germany; but the captain would not hear

of it. I insisted, declaring that nothing would induce me to be present at the ceremony; and the captain had all my belongings locked up, so that I could not go. The reason that he set so much store on my presence was due to the fact that I was the only man on board who could speak Russian. So that not only was I compelled to attend, but I realised that I was to be made the "show" man of the occasion!

In the afternoon the Tsar appeared in front of the hotel where we were staying—a marble star in the pavement now marks the spot on which he stood. I made a last despairing effort to lock myself in one of the rooms, but I was seized and thrust forward. Nicholas Alexandrovitch thanked us all; and then I saw to my dismay that certain members of our party were to receive decorations of some sort. Baron Grotthous and Graf Keiserling, who were in waiting on the Tsar, came towards me and informed me of his Majesty's intention to confer honours upon the leading men of the company, myself among them. I begged to be excused, on the grounds that I had done nothing to deserve so great an honour, and that consequently I could not accept it. The Baron told the Tsar of my determination; and the Tsar looked surprised. Then the Baron came back, and said that his Majesty wished to know the real reason for my refusal. I told him that honours and decorations were not much in my line; but that I was very fond of music, and was in-

fact an amateur violinist in my humble way. If his Majesty would make me a professional violinist I should be pleased to accept the honour. The Baron laughed good-naturedly and went back to his royal master with my request. Nicholas looked at me curiously, then he turned to Baron Grotthous and said in Russian, "Send him to Tolstoy—they are both incurables!"

But there was no need for the Tsar's advice.

As an example of the workings of "public opinion" in Russia, and of the enlightenment which results from his beneficent sway, the following episode is not without interest. A friend of mine was in the Government of Kaluga in the month of October. On a country road he met a farmer and his wife driving to the nearest post-office to post a letter. He entered into conversation with the man, and, after the customary preliminaries, asked him what he thought of the war with Japan. The farmer was astonished to hear from him that Russia was at war with Japan.

"I had heard something about a war," he admitted; "but I understood that it was with Turkey."

Then he drove off, muttering:

"What the devil do we want with Japan? And I thought all along that it was those dogs' sons of Turks that the Tsar was fighting!"

Until the recent general mobilisation of the reserves there were millions of people in Russia who had never heard of the war. But the summons

to "fall in," delivered often in the dead of night by the police, has caused a dread awakening in thousands of humble homes throughout Russia. "Public opinion" kept them in the dark to the last minute, in fear lest the men should be missing when the call came.

Now when in future my readers take up their morning papers, and see from the columns of admirable telegrams from Russia, that the *Novoe Vremya*, or the *Novosti*, or the *Graskdanin*, or any other Russian publication, has been quoting "public opinion" in Russia, let them bear in mind the following facts:

First, that "public opinion" means "Nicholas Alexandrovitch."

Secondly, that no man in Russia, with the exception of Tolstoy, dares openly to give expression to opinions, public or private, which are not in accord with "public opinion."

Thirdly, that Siberia is full of young men who thought that they had opinions of their own, and who are now more usefully employed digging and washing gold in the mines of the Amur and Udina.

"A plague of opinion! A man may wear it on both sides, like a leather jerkin"—so said Shakespeare; but had he been a Russian he would have known that on the other side of the jerkin is the convict's coat.

CHAPTER V

UNREST

To-day there is greater restlessness and dissatisfaction in Russia among all classes of the community than has ever existed in the history of that country. The reason is not far to seek. If a man may not express an opinion in the land of the Tsar there are, nevertheless, some who think for themselves. The number of thinkers in Russia has been steadily increasing since the days of Nicholas I. At first their thoughts were of no avail, for class was divided against class by an insurmountable barrier. The moujik was the moujik by himself. The merchant guilds, three in number, were three separate bodies. The upper aristocracy would have no dealings with the lower aristocracy. Caste distinctions isolated every section of the community, and the thoughts of the moujik were not the thoughts of the merchant, nor of the petty nobleman. But the last thirty years have wrought a great change in this respect. The points of view of the various classes are still widely separated, but they have, at last, all focused their eyes on the same object. They have discovered the stronghold of their common enemy.

It is not difficult to see how this came about. "Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows," and not only with bedfellows, but with fellows outside the bed as well.

Corruption, oppression and outrageous injustice have weighed heavily upon all classes alike. Even in the governing classes the feeling of insecurity and the fear of arbitrary power have become intolerable, and cause the aristocrat to forget his birth in the contemplation of his wrongs. The three guilds have sunk their class differences. The Finnish nation and the Poles have stretched out to each other the hand of fellowship. The Jews, Lithuanians and Letts are of one mind in all things, except religion. Slowly but surely all these various interests are drawing closer to one another, and advancing towards the poor moujik, who is not to be left out; for, when the time comes, the moujik is going to be a very important person.

The silence of the march of this great army of discontent is now and again broken by premature and futile outbursts on the part of a section of the force. Some local influence has proved too strong; some eager head has lost its balance. The students at the Universities are the worst offenders in this respect. Young, hot-headed, impetuous, they vent their indignation in futile processions, and are ridden down by police and Cossacks. The prisons in every Government are overcrowded, and the majority of the inmates are students. Poor boys! They are

led off to the prisons full of health and spirits; but in a month's time what a change is wrought in them! The bloom of health has gone, the high spirits are sobered. For thirty days they have been thinking—and now there is bitterness and vengeance in their souls. It is thus that Nicholas Alexandrovitch creates the men who will one day overthrow him. The pitiable part of it is, that their foolish demonstrations are useless to the cause which they are anxious to serve, nor do they help the thinking men who, at present, are using nothing but their cold unaided thoughts.

Though, for all practical purposes the so-called students' riots are useless, they yet serve, in an indirect way, to further the cause. Many of the parents of the students who have been arrested and imprisoned are peaceable subjects of the Tsar, and, for the most part, men of considerable means. But when they hear the fate of their sons, their wrath and indignation are stirred against the iniquity of the Government, and they become rebellious, and swear vengeance against the Tsar. Though the students themselves are harmless to the Government, their parents and relations will have to be reckoned with.

For instance; a rich iron manufacturer, Radishin by name, in the Government of Tambov, had two sons at the University of St. Petersburg. In September 1904 there was trouble at the University, and Radishin's two sons were arrested, and disappeared. He made inquiries for them;

and, after spending many roubles in procuring information, he traced one of them to a certain prison; but of his second son he could find out nothing. The officials to whom he applied pocketed his money with promises that he should see his son immediately; but his son was not forthcoming. Then Radishin returned home. He closed his works, throwing hundreds of hands out of employment; and converted into cash all the property that he could realise. He then removed to Tilsit, in Germany, near the Russian frontier. Now, for what purpose did he close his works, and go to Germany? And why did he select a town near the Russian frontier for his new home? I am more than sure that the reason is to be found in the fact that Gospodin Radishin wanted to invest the nine millions of roubles which he brought from Tambov in a manner which would not be at all pleasing to Nicholas Alexandrovitch, and that he is anxious to watch the result of his investment. Those roubles have gone to swell the amount of a certain fund which has been accumulating for years in foreign countries, bearing interest for a purpose.

Here is another case. A young man, Barkhanin by name, was studying at Odessa. He has no parents, but a very rich old maiden aunt, who treated him as her son. Some months ago a disturbance arose in Odessa, and Barkhanin was arrested amongst a number of other unruly students. There was no trial, but the boy was deported to

some Krepost in Archangel with a number of his fellow students. His aunt spared neither pains nor money to get word of him; but it was of no avail. Finding that she had been fleeced of thousands of roubles by the officials to whom she had addressed herself to no purpose, she realised her investments, and, leaving her home, came to London, where she arrived on November 17. But before she reached our shores she deposited in safe hands on the Continent the sum of a hundred thousand roubles for the same purpose as that to which Radishin devoted his fortune, and a like sum in trust for her nephew, should he ever return. Then with the balance of her fortune she came to London, where she is living now with only one object in view.

We have heard a great deal lately about the Russian University students' riots; that my readers may be under no misapprehension regarding these disturbances, I will try to give them some idea of their nature, as compared with demonstrations of a similar kind in our country. Take Edinburgh University, for example, on the day when the Chancellor of the University is elected. A crowd of rantin', roarin', raw-boned Scotsmen surging down the old grey streets ten abreast. Fighting, tearing, yelling, hustling the police, smashing the windows which unwary tradesmen have left unshuttered. "Hating the foe, with a playing at hate," they fall upon the rival faction and exchange hearty blows. A few are carried on stretchers to

the infirmary for repairs; the rest, battered and torn, seek their homes—and it is over. But what was it all about? Oh! merely the election of an amiable gentleman to the Chancellor's chair. He will never interfere with the students—possibly they will never see him—certainly they will never speak to him. But it is the right thing to give him a lively reception—and so they do.

Or again take a "cane rush" of an American University, or "flag days" at Bonn or Heidelberg, and compare them with the so-called students' disturbances about which we have been reading in the telegrams from Russia. No comparison is possible, for a Russian students' demonstration resembles more nearly a procession of small boys in our London streets, decked with paper caps, and beating tin cans with wooden swords, to persuade themselves and the passers by that they are soldiers. The Russian students march peacefully through the streets, singing. Sometimes they will stop outside the house of one of the professors, and then the *gorodovoys* charge them. If a few of the boys lose their temper and retaliate, the Cossacks are called out, and cold-blooded murder ends an exceedingly tame demonstration. Such sights I have seen myself in Russia; and the remembrance of my own student days has made me long with savage fury to join in and help the boys. There is no more harmless and inane form of amusement than a procession of Russian students through the streets, if they are left to them-

selves. Student riots, of which we read, are composed of two factors—the Universities supply the students; the police and Cossacks, the riot.

But the unrest in Russia is not confined to irresponsible students. There are equally irresponsible labour disturbances in various parts of the country—the latest in Odessa. They are very mild affairs. A few hundreds of moujiks half full of vodka are only a prey for the Cossacks' knout. They are slashed and trampled right and left without difficulty There is nothing in a Russian labour riot which can compare with the strike at Carnegie's ironworks at Pittsburg, or the Chicago railway strike, or the Pennsylvania coal miners' strike. The unaided efforts of students and labourers to assert themselves in Russia are dismal parodies of revolt. Ill-organised and ill-led, they are spiritless, half-hearted affairs. Centuries of oppression have rendered the Russian people unfit for spontaneous action; but when they are properly led it is another matter.

The difficulty which Nicholas Alexandrovitch has to contend with at the present is that he has not prisons enough to accommodate the students and labourers who have been arrested for disturbing the peace of Russia. But he is building them as fast as human labour can erect them in every Government of his kingdom. Meanwhile, as there is no accommodation for the rioters, it is cheaper to let the Cossacks cut them down. In the month of August 26,000 labourers were arrested in Moscow

alone, 17,000 in the Government of Podolia, and 19,000 in the Government of Kazan. In September the numbers were increased. In October and to November 15, 126,000 labouring men were arrested in six Governments of Russia, not mentioning "politicals" of high class. Many of these arrests were probably due to the mobilisation of the Reserves.

The outcome of these wholesale arrests is that the agricultural labourers are flocking to the towns, to take the places of those who have been seized by the police. They leave the land and the crops to look after themselves, and, all ignorant of the exigencies of town life, fall an easy prey to the first *gorodovoy* who wishes to show his zeal in the preservation of order and good government. The *gorodovoy* has no difficulty in finding a pretext for carrying off the unfortunate moujik to jail. For people to gather in the street without permission is treasonable in Russia. To resist the charge of the murderous Cossacks is treason. In fact everything is treason, unless there is a Ukaze of sanction from Nicholas Alexandrovitch. And in the light of official eyes everybody is suspect, and treated as a pickpocket or tramp.

Some years ago I was travelling to Kremenchug, and wishing to spend a few hours in Elizabethgrad, I left my luggage at the station, and went to the hotel for dinner. I had my passport in my pocket, but as I did not order a room at the hotel I was not

asked for it by the proprietor. Whilst I was at dinner a burly official with a sword at his heels entered the dining-room with two subordinates behind him. He was the Assistant-Politzmaister, and he stood near the door making a careful survey of the room. Then he came to the table where I was sitting, and with a look of triumph in his eyes, demanded in his curtest and most official tones:

"*Vasky passport!*" ("Your passport!")

There was no attempt at civility in his manner or words—no "gospodin" or "bareen." He was uncompromisingly offensive, and as I had plenty of time at my disposal I resolved that he should pay for it. I began by calling his good manners in question in a voice loud enough for the other diners to hear. He flushed with anger, and answered that he had no time to argue with me, and that if I had no passport I must accompany him to the office. But, unlike the officer, I had plenty of time, and I was in no hurry to hand him my passport. So I reminded him that I was a traveller, and that as I had left my passport with my baggage he must wait until I had finished dinner, when he could accompany me to the railway-station. There was nothing for him to do but to wait, and I leisurely finished my meal. It was not until then that I suddenly remembered that I had my passport in my pocket; and, in the presence of the occupants of the room who were taking a lively interest in the affair, I handed it across the table to the Assistant-Politz-

maister. He unfolded and looked at the precious document; but as it was in English not one word could he read of it. However, he turned it over, and on the back he found the *visé* of the Russian Ambassador in London, and the date on which I crossed the frontier. The *visé* was enough for him, and he handed me back the passport with the question:

"How is it that you speak like a Russian? Were you born in England?"

I reminded him that it was none of his business where I was born. The other diners were enjoying the scene immensely. There is nothing which gives greater satisfaction to the Russian mind than the confounding and humiliation of an official. During dinner they had looked at me with commiseration, thinking that I should certainly be marched off to prison when it was over. But now the faces which were turned in my direction all wore expressions of mirth and happiness, and the Assistant-Politzmaister pretended not to see them. As he turned away and went towards the door the proprietor of the hotel intercepted him, and I could hear him explaining that the least he could do was to apologise for the inconvenience which he had caused me.

"The gentleman is not a *karmantchik* (pickpocket)!" he concluded.

"Then if he is not a *karmantchik* he ought to be!" said the Politzmaister angrily.

In justice to the official I must state that there had recently been several robberies committed in the neighbourhood; and no doubt he imagined that he had at last caught the thief, and would be able to share the plunder with him.

CHAPTER VI

CORRUPTION

SOME of my kind critics, in reviewing my book "Russia as it Really Is," have accused me of exaggerating the evils which exist in Russia, more particularly the wholesale corruption which permeates every class without distinction. Since that book was published, in June 1904, the British public has learned from various sources a great deal more about Russia and her government and people than it ever knew, or wished to know, before. In the light of the discoveries which people in this country have made from recent books and from the articles of correspondents in the newspapers and reviews on the subject of Russia, I do not think that there are many to-day who will accuse me of over-stating the case. It is now very generally admitted that the downfall of Russia at the hands of Japan is due to corruption; and I am able to give some particulars which bear out this theory.

In the month of April 1904 a sum of money amounting to tens of millions of roubles was handed over to the Grand Duke Sergius for military stores and supplies to the troops in Manchuria. In May

several million roubles worth of tinned meat, sugar, tobacco, and vodka left Moscow for the seat of war. The following is the route which Tamaroff, who was in charge of the transport of these goods, selected: from Moscow to Pskoff, thence to Suwalki and Danzig, where the goods were transferred to a ship, and presumably left for Manchuria by sea. But I happen to know that those provisions for the army in Manchuria were sold, at a greatly reduced rate, to certain merchants in Germany.

Later in May a consignment of clothing and cloth stuff left Moscow for the troops. On this occasion the Trans-Siberian Railway was employed as the means of transport. But when the consignment reached Samara it was reported that, owing to the heavy traffic over the line, a breakdown had occurred which would cause considerable delay. Some contractors at Samara, doubtless wishing to facilitate the working of the line, decided that it was not necessary to send forward such a large quantity of woollen goods to the troops, in view of the fact that it was summer weather. They therefore detained the greater portion of the goods, which were disposed of by them in Samara.

In June a very large consignment of medical appliances and comforts was despatched under the auspices of a charitable society to Manchuria, but in the third week of the same month two dealers from Memel bought the whole consignment for a little more than a tenth of its value.

In June, again, nearly 100,000 cases of vodka left St. Petersburg for the soldiers in Manchuria. On this occasion the cases arrived safely at their destination in the month of July—but no vodka!

In August the ammunition and explosives which were consigned to General Kuropatkin were sold *en route* to two well-known Chinese merchants, not themselves Chinamen, for about half their value, and the powder which eventually arrived in the hands of the Russian army was an entirely harmless quantity.

Now the Grand Duke Sergius was entrusted with the duty of forwarding these articles and munitions of war to their destination. I am not aware of the system of receipts and vouchers in use in the Russian army, but it is a remarkable fact that these wholesale depredations should be possible and that they should be allowed to continue unchecked.

The Grand Duke Alexander since the outbreak of the war has been entrusted with a very large sum of money which was subscribed for the benefit of the soldiers in Manchuria, and of which only a very small proportion has reached its destination. Can Alexander Michaelovitch account for the leakage?

Then again the Grand Duke Alexander has to account for some hundreds of thousands of roubles subscribed for the widows and orphans of the soldiers, which it was intended should be distributed direct to them, but of which not one kopek had been received up to the end of November.

The same Grand Duke can also explain how it happened that M. Bezobrazoff, who four years ago would not have been trusted on credit for the value of a box of cigars in St. Petersburg, is to-day one of the richest men in Russia.

Now in order to show that punishment swift and sure sometimes overtakes those who have the handling of government stores in Russia, I will give an instance of minor importance as compared with the wholesale "deals" to which I have referred. In the months of April, May, and June the Tsar paid for an enormous quantity of hay for the army in Manchuria. When the contract was completed and the *podratchik* (contractor) had been paid, an officer whose duty it was to check the amount supplied discovered that the *podratchik* had only delivered about one-third of the order, though he had received payment in full. Nothing would induce that officer to change his figures, and he made his report accordingly to his superior officer. The superior officer raised his eyebrows, hummed and hawed, and finally pointed out to his subordinate that he was making a very grave charge against the *podratchik;* but that the matter should be investigated. If he proved to be right in his assertion all would be well; but if not it would be a very serious matter for him. The next day it was found that the officer was wrong, and he was summarily dismissed from his post. Shortly after his dismissal he was arrested as a "dangerous person." At this moment

the unfortunate officer, who had no earthly right to be honest, is lingering in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Then there was the "boot scandal." The contract price was supposed to be three roubles a pair. The full amount of the order was actually delivered in Manchuria. But as the contractor had to make the boots for 1 rouble 75 kopeks he could hardly afford to use leather in the soles. So when Kuropatkin's men tried on their new boots they pushed their feet through the soles. Several *podratchiks* were arrested in connection with the job, but the man who received 1 rouble 25 kopeks for every pair of boots delivered was a Grand Duke.

Tons of sugar which were sent to Manchuria for the army were found to be absolutely useless. Two-thirds of it was a mixture of flour and sand. Five contractors are in the fortress at Riga in consequence; but the man who made money out of it was M. Bezobrazoff.

In Moscow, Yaroslaff, Kaluga, and Tula flannel shirts and suits of clothes made from the materials which were given for the use of the soldiers are being sold openly in the shops. Even the street pedlars are selling the shirts from house to house. The story of M. Marozoff, the donor of thousands of blankets and other woollen goods for the army, and the Grand Duke Sergius, Governor-General of Moscow, is too well known now to need repetition. The attempt on the part of the Grand Duke to

blackmail M. Marozoff and the leading merchants of Moscow, in order to extort money from them, was frustrated in M. Marozoff's case at least, and the incident has led to complications which appear to have resulted in the resignation of the Governor-Generalship of Moscow by the Grand Duke.

On the pretence of increasing the rolling stock on the Trans-Siberian railway millions of roubles have been stolen by high officials in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Millions have been appropriated for heavier rails, sleepers, and frogs for the permanent way, which have not been expended upon the line, though something has been done in this respect.

This systematic wholesale corruption is frankly acknowledged by the Russians, as the following incident shows. I was travelling from St. Petersburg to Kostromo. I was alone in a first-class carriage, but at the first station out of St. Petersburg the carriage door was opened, and a stately official, whose uniform was hidden beneath a heavy fox fur coat, entered my compartment. The train started again, and my companion, having settled himself comfortably, surprised me by suddenly addressing me in English.

"You are an American?" he said.

"What makes you think so?" I answered, with some curiosity.

He pointed to my bag, on which there was a label of the White Star Line—New York to London. I told him that I had lately come from

America; and, the ice having been broken, we were soon engaged in conversation. He appeared to be a well-read man, and particularly well-informed concerning all the latest news in foreign countries. Presently he turned the conversation to Mr. McKinley's election, and the Bryan question of 16 to 1. Then to Tammany Hall, and I was amused to find that he seemed to know more of that institution than I did. About that time several of the Tammany chiefs had so far overstepped the bounds of Tammany propriety that they had been haled before the court of New York City, a circumstance which vastly amused my travelling companion. He leaned back in his seat and said, with a broad smile:

"If these Tammany chiefs had come to us here in Russia, and taken a few lessons from our administrators, they would have known better than to get into trouble over such a trifle. We can school the whole world in corruption."

Then he handed me his cigarette case, and we exchanged cards; and I discovered that my companion was the comptroller of the railway on which we were travelling. When he left me he said, with a spice of Russian humour:

"When you return to England go and see Mr. Richard Croker, and tell him to come to Russia. We will guarantee to make him a success in a year's time."

But I answered that Mr. Croker was already a success in New York.

Another form of corruption in Russia which is very remunerative to officials in high places is trafficking in commissions in the army and navy. There is no need for a lad at the Naval Academy of St. Petersburg to exert himself to acquire knowledge of his profession if his father has influence or if he is a man of wealth. After a year or so at the Academy, provided that the boy can smoke and drink, his father can get him the desired commission for a few thousand roubles. It is the same in the army, but commissions in that service are cheaper. As a result, a great many officers in both services are grossly ignorant. I have met naval officers in Cronstadt who knew nothing of the navigation of their own harbours; but I never met one who could not drink vodka.

Now in the face of all this open corruption one may well ask: "What is the Minister of Justice doing?" But, alas! justice in Russia is as corrupt as any other department of State. The post of Minister of Justice was, until quite lately, held by M. Muravieff, but according to the latest reports from Russia he has tendered his resignation. He used to be a member of a select body known in Russia as the "Immortal Seven." The following personages constituted that illustrious septet:

1. M. Pobiedonostseff; 2. M. de Plehve; 3. The Grand Duke Sergius; 4. The Grand Duke Alexander Michaelovitch; 5. M. Bezobrazoff; 6.

The Dowager Empress Marie Dagmar; 7. M. Muravieff.

M. Muravieff was Minister of Justice during the trial of the Kishineff murderers. It would be interesting if he would tell us how much money the party of Antonor and Tschekan paid for their liberation, as all the world knows that they were guilty of murder. Then as regards the robbery and corruption which is daily going on in connection with the war: M. Muravieff must have known of the misappropriation of the charitable funds for the widows and orphans, for as Minister of Justice he was one of the trustees of the fund. But he has not spoken. Whom is he sheltering? He knows of the ammunition robbery, and the rolling-stock swindle and the clothing and vodka thefts. And since he knew, why did he not take action whilst he was still Minister of Justice?

But the Minister of Justice mutters "Nitchevo!" He probably holds with Cicero that "what is dishonestly got vanishes in profligacy."

CHAPTER VII

THE ARMY AT HOME

THE army of the Tsar in Manchuria has compelled the admiration of the world by the stubborn bravery with which it has met defeat on defeat, and has hitherto managed to avert crowning disaster. The resource and nerve of General Kuropatkin in Manchuria, and of General Stoessel in Port Arthur, entitle both these commanders to recognition in the pages of history, and to the gratitude of the Tsar and the Bureaucracy of Russia for whom they are fighting. Ghastly hand-to-hand conflicts, which were regarded by many military authorities of the day as things of the past, have been one of the features of the war, and testify to the stubborn determination of the Russian soldiers in defence, as they do to the reckless dash of the Japanese in attack.

But the mistake which the onlookers are making in respect to the Russian army is in the supposition that the Tsar can continue for an indefinite time to send to the front an unlimited number of men of the same stamp as those who have borne the brunt of the first ten months of the war. It must not be forgotten that these troops consist mainly of old soldiers

of the standing army and Cossacks, men who have learnt the business of war before war broke out, who were either in the garrisons of Manchuria or Korea, or who were sent out as reinforcements in complete units from the standing army in Russia and Siberia. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Tsar can continue sending troops of this description to the seat of war for fifty years, as some people assert. That Russia can go on fighting for years is true enough; and she can draft plenty of men, but not soldiers. It is difficult, I know, to persuade the British civilian that a soldier is a skilled workman. He prefers to believe that one man is as good as another where fighting is concerned. It is a comfortable belief which eases his conscience of the necessity of doing anything for the defence of his country, or of paying his professional soldiers too highly to do his fighting for him. But in these days of scientific warfare the training and skill of the private soldier count for much. The Russian reservists, who are now being taken in thousands to reinforce the army in Manchuria, are poor soldiers. They have forgotten the few simple lessons which they acquired with great effort when they were in the ranks. For the most part they have sunk into loafing, unsoldierly habits; and they have absolutely no enthusiasm for the war. They are deserting by thousands; and by every means, from malingering to suicide, they are endeavouring to avoid their obligations to the Tsar. Yet these reservists and

the recruits are the only fighting material on which the Tsar can draw. I do not mean to say that there are not hundreds of thousands of men of the standing army still in Russia; they are there in their units sure enough—and there they will remain; for Nicholas knows better than to send them to the front. He cannot do without them in Russia. Taking the Governments of European Russia in alphabetical order, from Archangel and Astrachan a few more soldiers of the standing army can be drawn. From Bessarabia and Chernigov the Government will not dare to take any more. Courland is already drawn upon to the last man. From the Don Region and Ekaterinoslav only the Cossacks will be taken. From Esthonia, a few. Until Olonets is reached in the alphabetical list there are sixteen Governments from which the Tsar will not dare to take a regiment. Orel, Orenburg, Penza, Perm, Podolia, Poltava, and Pskov can still supply regiments of the standing army. I do not think that any will be drawn from Ryazan, St. Petersburg, Samara, Saratov, Simbersk, Smolensk. Only reservists will be taken from Tambov, Taurida, and Vilna; but some of the standing army may still be had from Ufa, Tver and Tula. The remaining eight Governments, from Vitebsk to the Sea of Azov, are steeped in discontent, and the Tsar is unlikely therefore to withdraw any of the standing army from them. Regiments from Poland and Finland are quite out

of the question. Caucasia is longing for the withdrawal of her garrisons. Siberia and Central Asia have been bearing the brunt since the war began—it is a question how long they can continue to send regiments and drafts to the seat of war.

I was asked a short time ago why the unfortunate Russian reservists were being called up, and sent to the front, whilst such a large proportion of the standing army remained at home in Russia. It was an easy question to answer for any one possessed of any knowledge of the present state of affairs of the country. Every Government is honeycombed with discontent. There is not a prison in Russia which is not full to overflowing. Domestic affairs are threatening to the last degree. Vengeance is on the lips of thousands—even the moujik is grinding his teeth, and calling for more vodka. Revolutionary literature in every language of the country is being freely distributed amongst the people and in the barracks, and is being eagerly read by those who can read and listened to by those who cannot. There is a powerful party in Russia, with an enormous sum of money to back it, only waiting the right moment to strike. Two of the chief agents of the Bureaucracy, Bobrikoff and de Plehve, have been assassinated. The Zemstvos, which once were humble supplicants at the table of Bureaucracy for crumbs of self-government, have asserted themselves, and demand a Constitution, thereby showing the extent to which the landed

proprietors and the farmers have come into agreement and sympathy. Men have begun to hold up their heads and demand *Russkoe prava* (Russian right). Women no longer give place in the streets to the uniformed officials who used to jostle them into the roadway. There is a change coming over Russia; a restless ocean of discontent heaving with a long ground-swell. A storm is gathering; and the ship of Bureaucracy, which has ruled the waves for so many years, will need skilful handling if she is to weather the storm.

These are the reasons why Nicholas Alexandrovitch sends his reservists to the front, and keeps his army at home. He knows that the reservists are with the people and for the people, whilst the men of the standing army are held fast in the iron grip of discipline, and must perforce obey. But in spite of the standing army in Russia, history will soon repeat itself. I hope no foolish queen will ask why the moujiks don't eat cake when they have no bread.

The mobilisation of the reserve in Russia is a tragedy of the most heartrending description. Think what it means! the calling up of these poor moujiks, who are often the sole supporters of families or parents, to be sent they know not whither, to fight for a cause for which they care nothing. All over Russia to-day the terror of pressgang hangs like a heavy cloud. What district will be the next to be ravaged? The police are at the door in the

dead of night. "Get up, Ivan, get up; the Little Father has sent for you, and you must leave your wife and little ones, and come and serve him. What will become of them? That is nothing to us. They must look after themselves."

The Rittmaister with his frontier guards are reaping a rich harvest, for thousands are streaming over the borders to avoid the dread summons.

"I see you are a reservist! Pay a rouble and pass on!" That was the formula of the police at the railway stations in Odessa. But those who could not pay were arrested and sent back.

The following is a list of the more important centres from which wholesale desertions have taken place. The figures relate to the period from April to October 1904:

Place.	Regular soldiers.	Reservists.
Vilna	900	3,120
Smolensk	340	1,100
St. Petersburg	700	5,600
Orenburg	90	612
Orel	1,400	2,800
Moghilev	690	3,200
Minsk	72	1,700
Livonia	9	1,400
Kherson	245	4,985
Kharkoff	716	14,000
Kovno	157	16,000
Ekaterinoslaff	—	922
Don Region	1,400	7,000
Chernigoff	720	3,945
Bessarabia	114	967

In the month of October I am told that the desertions increased enormously. When I mention the desertions of reservists, there are included in the numbers those who absented themselves from the *Voiskaja Pavinost* (Conscription Tribunal).

Stand with me on the railway station at Radzivilishki. There is a long train beside the platform crowded with poor reservists. The first bell has rung, and wives with tear-stained faces cling pitifully to their husbands' necks; and the children stand by whimpering and holding their fathers' hands The bell again. An old woman in rags caresses her son's face in her hands; but she cannot speak nor even cry. Her heart is dead—she glares at the railway carriages hopelessly; and yet she does not understand. Then the last summons of the bell. The police, stretching out their arms, join hands and push the people back. With a mournful shriek the engine drags them slowly away—away. A bitter cry of anguish goes up from the platform. Some one is down; and a girl is bending over a body on the ground. It is the old woman, who has dropped dead. Then they disperse like silent phantoms into the night.

Or again at Poltava station. The scene is the same—the women and children on the platform, and the men crowding to the windows of the locked carriages for a last look at those whom they are leaving. The station-master gives the signal to start; and as the train draws out a woman, maddened

with grief, throws herself in front of the engine. Another and yet another dash forward and fling themselves beneath the quickening train. A man at the window sees, and with a despairing cry struggles to throw himself from the open casement, but his comrades hold him back. They push him into his seat with a rough sympathy which they have no words to express. The train clatters on its way, and some one in the carriage starts a song; the others take up the refrain half-heartedly. But the man who tried to throw himself through the window does not sing. He gets up gravely and crosses himself, and sits down again. The others take no notice of him, and in a few minutes he rises again, and crosses himself repeatedly. Then he kneels down on the floor of the carriage. He does not get up—his head falls back. The song breaks off abruptly, and sturdy hands lift him on to the seat and try to revive him. But there is a long blade buried to the hilt in his breast. And then no one sings. At the next station they call the guard of the train, and the body of the man who saw his wife throw herself on the line is taken out for burial.

Such sights as these can be seen any day in Russia since the mobilisation of the reserves began. The instances which I have given are no flights of imagination, they actually took place; the first on October 16, 1904, and the second on November 9. But the description of such scenes is beyond me. I am stupid, and my heart aches as I try to write of

them. Charles Kingsley or Victor Hugo would have brought them home to the reader, but I cannot.

Compare the mobilisation of the reserves in Russia with the call to arms of the United States when war broke out with Spain. President McKinley made himself the most unpopular man in America because he was compelled to refuse the services of hundreds of thousands of men of all classes who wanted to go to the war. Those who were accepted considered themselves very fortunate, and the rejected felt the humiliation keenly. Again, take the mobilisation of the reserves in our own country during the South African War, when 98 per cent. responded to the summons, and volunteers from every quarter of the Empire offered themselves. We do not hear of the Russian reservists crowding round the St. Petersburg War Office and demanding to be sent to Manchuria; nor have we any reason to believe that those who have not yet been mobilised have felt insulted. Wherein lies the difference? National temperament is certainly not enough to account for it. The reservists of Great Britain, like those of Russia, were called upon to leave their wives and families without a bread-winner. Here too, there were many stricken hearts at parting. And yet there is all the difference in the world between the two mobilisations—a difference for which I shall leave the reader to account.

As I have said before, there are people in this

country who assert that Russia can carry on the war for fifty or even a hundred years, and still have plenty of men and funds left to continue fighting. I maintain that Russia cannot keep it up for more than five years. That is certainly a big drop from fifty or a hundred years; but I will justify my statement.

Russia at the present time has to maintain in Manchuria an army of a million men. I fancy I can hear my readers say that I must be dreaming—and the eager critic congratulating himself on a windfall of inaccuracy. Of course, reader and critic alike know that there are not in Manchuria to-day more than 300,000 Russian troops at the outside; probably 250,000 is nearer the mark. Very good. I have not stated that there are more than 250,000 men under General Kuropatkin in Manchuria. I merely said that Russia has to *maintain* an army of a million—that is to say, to pay for an army of a million. If there are at the present time 250,000 men under Kuropatkin, there are Grand Dukes, officials, contractors, and various lesser thieves in Russia drawing on the Government for four times that number—in Russia they call it *na chai* (for tea). From a pair of boots to be delivered to a battleship in Cronstadt it is *na chai, gospodin!*

It is quite a long way from St. Petersburg to Manchuria, and *na chai* begins at St. Petersburg and crops up at intervals all the way. Grand Dukes and other officials must live, and they cannot live by

bread alone, therefore it is *na chai*. At Moscow there are more Grand Dukes and officials; with them it is also *na chai, gospodin!* On leaving Moscow only tea dust is left; but pilfering fingers at Tula, Penza, Samara, Ufa, Omsk scrape up the remnants; and by the time that it arrives in Manchuria only the empty tea chest remains. And Kuropatkin smiles and mutters: "*To Nitchevo!* Let us be thankful for what we have not received!"

Thus it happens that Russia has to pay four or five times over for what she actually does not receive. And that is what I mean when I say that to-day she is maintaining an army of a million men in Manchuria. Kuropatkin will require another million before he can hope to defeat the Japanese army opposed to him and drive them back into the sea. It is a question of how long Russia can pay for this vast army of "ineffectives" at the seat of war, from her already depleted treasury.

There is a silver lining to every cloud, and Nicholas Alexandrovitch has discovered the silver in the war cloud which hangs over him; for the war has enabled him to solve a great problem which had sorely tried his predecessors for generations, and that is the Jewish question. This is how he is doing it. The population of Bessarabia is 1,933,900, of which 167,827 are Jews; Christian soldiers in Manchuria about 6 per cent. of the population, Jewish soldiers 21 per cent. The Government of Vilna: Population, 1,791,900; Jewish population, 175,997;

Christian soldiers in Manchuria, 2½ per cent.; Jewish soldiers, 19 per cent. Moghilev: Population, 1,790,041; Jewish population, 151,056; Christian soldiers in Manchuria, 3 per cent.; Jewish soldiers, 18 per cent. And so on throughout the Governments of Russia where Jews, perforce, must congregate. It is a plan almost as simple as the populating of Provinces by the wholesale deportation of moujiks, which he carried on with so much success before the war broke out. Really, Nicholas Alexandrovitch is a very ingenious and well-meaning young man!

It is the same with the Jewish doctors. From St. Petersburg 150 physicians have been sent to the front, of whom 90 are Jews! I cannot refrain from quoting a Central News telegram: "The *Russ*, whose editor is the son of the proprietor of the *Novoe Vremya*, states: 'The first detachment of the Red Cross had a doctor at Wa-fang-kau who refused to retire, and when remonstrated with said: "I shall leave when I have finished binding the wounds of all the soldiers!" This doctor is from Kieff, and I have the honour to inform the *Novoe Vremya* that he is one of the "dirty Jews."'"

CHAPTER VIII

THE SEAT OF WAR

FROM the contemplation of the present state of affairs in Russia let us now turn to the Far East, and glance briefly at the army on active service in Manchuria. I do not think that modern history has a parallel to the present war for ferocity and callous cruelty on the part of the Russian army—not so much towards the foe with whom they are fighting, as to their own men and the unfortunate inhabitants of the country which is the battle-field of the opposing forces. Drunkenness, debauchery, gambling, are the pastimes of all ranks at Harbin and Mukden, more especially of the officers. In action, incompetence, indifference and stoicism are the prevailing features. The officers, for the most part, show no regard for the comfort or lives of their men, who are herded in crude formations into the firing line to repel the attacks of the Japanese. War is a desperately cruel game at all times; but when it is played without skill and in the spirit of indifference as to the outcome, it becomes a ghastly carnage on the altar of Moloch. Bravery and self-sacrifice and the other noble traits in human nature

which war discovers, often in unlooked-for places, are lost to sight in the reeking smoke of the sacrifice.

Now let me take some of the evidence before me, and descend from generalities to particulars. First then General Sassulitch comes under notice, surrounded by a staff of boys from St. Petersburg and Moscow in their new uniforms. The scene is on the banks of the Yalu, at the beginning of the war. The General and his officers are full of confidence; champagne is still plentiful; and in the intervals of duty the officers find time to fleece each other at cards in their quarters. When they are tired of cards, or have lost all their money, there are other diversions. The women of the country may not be quite to the young dandies' tastes, but they will serve; and the fact that they are unwilling adds a zest to the escapade. They have plenty of time on their hands, for it would be absurd to fortify the strong position above the banks of the river, or to entrench themselves. Far away to the South it is said that there are some Japanese soldiers coming towards them. When they arrive they will be wiped off the face of the earth; and then the officers can go back to Mukden on leave, and drink champagne in the hotels all day long, and tell the regiments quartered there of their glorious victory.

But one day the Japanese came, and, attacking them in front and on the flank, swept them back with heavy loss from the hills above the Yalu.

General Sassulitch was sitting in his portable shelter, meditating on the strange thing which had happened to his force. How was he to know that the Japanese would cross the river by a ford four or five versts away, which he had never thought of watching? From time to time reports were brought of the progress of the fight, and when at last the heavy list of casualties was made known to him, he exclaimed:

"*Nitchevo!* We will destroy the yellow monkeys soon enough. What is the use of troubling?"

He still had unlimited faith in the Cossacks, and he despatched a *sotnia* of them to attack the Japanese. But the *sotnia* never returned. The fate of the Cossacks was reported to him, and he is said to have answered callously:

"What! Only one *sotnia?*"

Then there is the aristocratic General Baron Stackelberg, who lost, by atrocious generalship, the battle of Wa-fang-kau. On this occasion he despatched a regiment to attack an imaginary force of Japanese. The commander of the regiment, naturally enough, failed to understand the order, and, wishing for more explicit instructions, asked the General where he was to lead his men.

"Lead them to Hell!" Stackelberg shouted. And the commander obeyed.

General Stackelberg spares no pains to ensure his own comfort in the field. When train-loads of wounded soldiers were being brought into Mukden,

and some of the men were perishing for want of water, Stackelberg had a *rota* of soldiers pouring the precious liquid on the roof of his saloon to keep him cool.

Here is another story from Wa-fang-kau. A company of Russian soldiers, with success within their grasp, refused to take advantage of the situation, and began to retreat. The officer in command called upon them to rally, assuring them that the position was won and that victory was theirs. He was told: "If this is victory—go and take it!" And the retreat continued. Seeing that it was hopeless to attempt to bring his men on again, the officer fired his revolver into his demoralised company, and, keeping the last cartridge for himself, blew out his brains.

There is a battle going on in Manchuria quite independent of the Japanese. It is a battle royal amongst the Russian officers themselves. Professional jealousy und intrigue are rampant in the army. In the struggle for place and power no scruples and no principles of honour are observed. The Tsar, at the conference at the Hague, brought forward no suggestions regarding warfare of this description, and therefore the combatants are at liberty to use whatever weapons they can lay hands on. Calumny and spying on the movements of adversaries are among the methods employed. The Russian colonel to whom I referred in the opening chapter deserted on account of the

intolerable system of spying to which he was sub jected by a jealous superior. He would rather work as a farm labourer in the Argentine Republic, he told me, than hold a commission in the Russian army. Desertion at the front both among officers and men is rife, and it is not merely individual desertions, bodies of men, sometimes with their officers, going over the border into China and distributing themselves there.

War drags the mask from the souls of men—the mask which civilisation and convention compel mankind to wear, to hide alike what is unseemly and what is good in human nature—and we see the real creature as he is, with all his glaring contrasts and anomalies. The laws of God and the superstructure of custom which man has built upon them give place to the compelling force of discipline; and if that is swept away no restraints remain, and man reverts to his primordial state. And what sort of animal is he? A wild beast with a conscience. Cruel, savage, lustful, loving, self-sacrificing, heroic —a mass of contradictions and unaccountable irregularities.

Take this scene from Liao-yang railway-station, to the accompaniment of the roar of the guns on the plain. The wounded are pouring in from the front, mangled, torn, bleeding in the throes of unspeakable pain, in the agonies of death. They are laid in rows on the platform to await transport to the North, and sweet Sisters of Charity move among them

ministering to them. A priest with crucifix in hand mumbles perfunctory prayers to the dying. Close by a party of Cossack officers are seated round a table drinking champagne and joking. Their shouts of ribald laughter mingle with the groans and shrieks of the wounded; the pop of the champagne corks answers to the boom of the guns without. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"—as these are dying beside them. *Nitchevo!* But most incongruous of all are the painted prostitutes who loll at the table with the officers and ply them with drink and caresses.

Or this, from the camp, where a war correspondent is sitting in his tent. A famished soldier staggers to the entrance and looks in.

"What do you want?"

"For three days we have had nothing to eat."

"Here, then, eat this."

"I can't eat."

"Why not?"

"There is an officer with me, and he is worse off than myself."

"Very well, call him in too."

"He won't come. He is ashamed. Let me take some food to him—he will be grateful."

These are stories related by war correspondents in the press. They may therefore be accepted as representing faithfully the state of affairs at the front. It was a leading Russian correspondent who deplored the fact that officers on their way to join their regi-

ments treat the Sisters of Mercy as they are accustomed to treat women of the class that follows in the rear of the army. It is as well that the world should know something of the seamy side of the war, and not be always fed on glowing panegyrics of bravery and showy heroism. It is to the interior economy of the war, and not to the clash of battle, that we should look for the true state of an army. Bravery is an estimable quality; but it does not decide the fate of wars. A hundred other factors have to be reckoned with, and in many of these the Russian army is woefully deficient.

The defence of Port Arthur is exciting the admiration of the world. Very good. But the Russians themselves declared it to be impregnable; and so it would have been, but for inefficiency and corruption. The natural advantages of the position, strengthened by field works and permanent fortifications, and manned by well-trained and disciplined troops, would have offered insuperable obstacles to all attacks. But, good soldier and commander as General Stoessel undoubtedly is, he has been unable to prevent the capture of important positions in the main line of his defence, which must soon lead to the fall of the whole fortress. Fully provisioned, with armament and ammunition complete, with a garrison efficiently trained in the use of gun and rifle, and with the enthusiasm of a good cause to inspire it, Port Arthur could have held out for years. But these essentials were lacking—and so

there is nothing left for the brave defenders to do but to fight like rats in a pit. Not for an hour will General Stoessel and his fort commanders allow the fighting to cease; for they know that if an armistice were declared, they could no longer prevent the garrison from flocking over to the Japanese and surrendering. Only recently it was reported that an armistice had been arranged to bury the dead; but apparently the Russians did not take advantage of it, the fort commanders refusing to allow their men outside the perimeter of the works. Like galley slaves, the men are kept in the trenches night and day. There they must remain, and there they must die when the Japanese with fanatical valour storm over the parapets. There is a second line behind them to keep them steady; but should they fall back before the fierce onslaught of the attack, then the fire of the second line is turned indiscriminately on friend and foe alike. The trenches are their last home and their grave—they may never return from them. General Stoessel and his officers are well advised to keep an incessant watch on the men of the garrison; for some have already escaped and sold information to the besiegers—I have direct evidence on this point, or I would not make the statement. Be it remembered that the Russian soldier has no enthusiasm for this war, and no patriotism to restrain him from such despicable actions; on the other hand, the brutal treatment which he receives from his officers makes his service

of the Tsar one prolonged misery; and in the example which they set him he sees no incentive to honesty.

In Russia, of course, and in the press of some European countries, desperate efforts are being made to conceal the real state of affairs at the seat of war, and to present the Russian chances of success in glowing colours. The reasons for this misrepresentation of the facts are obvious; but who are the men responsible for the deception? Certainly not the outspoken M. de Witte, nor Count Lamsdorff, nor any far-seeing man in Russia who can appreciate the danger which threatens the country in the prolongation of the war. The men who are striving to blind their own eyes and the eyes of the people of Russia are the Grand Duke Alexis, the Grand Duke Vladimir, the Grand Duke Alexander, and the Grand Duke Sergius, together with the whole Bureaucracy of Russia. They have already robbed the moujik of all save his *rubashka* and coarse canvas trousers, and they have no scruples about sending him to stop Japanese bullets in Manchuria so long as they can persuade the world that success must eventually crown the Russian arms. Since the war began they have pocketed millions of roubles of contract money and charitable funds, so they may well cry, "*Vive la guerre!*" But there are other reasons why they desire the continuation of the war. One is that success is the only escape for Bureaucracy from the vengeance of the nation.

The other I shall deal with fully in a subsequent chapter.

No one knows better than that honest old soldier, General Kuropatkin, that he is fighting a losing game—and nothing can make it otherwise. There is something very pathetic in the excerpts from his despatches which are issued for publication. He has evidently been told that he must make the best of things in his reports to St. Petersburg, and so the poor man tells pretty little stories of Russian bravery—how a company of Japanese were routed by a *sotnia* of Cossacks, or how a reconnoitring patrol of the enemy were repulsed with loss by an outpost picquet. He must envy the dignified silence of Marshal Oyama, which is only broken to speak of important developments in the campaign.

Like so many of his subordinates, General Kuropatkin has two campaigns on his hands: one in Manchuria against the Japanese; the other in St. Petersburg with the forces of calumny and jealousy. He is more likely to meet his Waterloo in St. Petersburg than in Mukden. It was stated that the friends of Kuropatkin were elated when Admiral Alexeieff was recalled from Manchuria; but it seems to me that it was about the worst thing that could happen to him. So long as Alexeieff was in Manchuria, Kuropatkin could keep one eye on the Japanese generals, and with the other he could watch Alexeieff. But now his enemy

is in St. Petersburg, where he can whisper his calumnies and insinuations into the ear of Nicholas Alexandrovitch, which is always open to the latest breeze.

Poor Kuropatkin! Is there a soldier in the world who would change places with him?

CHAPTER IX

THE REAL CAUSE OF THE WAR—PART I

IN the last chapter I gave two good reasons for the Grand Dukes and the Bureaucracy of Russia wishing to continue the war, and I stated that there was a third to be dealt with later. I shall, therefore, endeavour to throw some light on the real cause of the war in this and the following chapters, and show that the prolongation of the hopeless struggle is due in a great measure to the same cause. There are many questions of the day which are never satisfactorily answered. They are left over for the historian to solve. But the historian is at a disadvantage in point of time; many of the lesser circumstances which contributed to the question are unrecorded and forgotten; and he is obliged to leave it as open as he found it.

The question which is exercising the minds of a very considerable portion of humanity at this moment is: "Why did not the Tsar of Russia evacuate Manchuria in accordance with his promise, and, by so doing, save Russia from a disastrous war?" I can throw some light on this question; and I shall do so in the hope of rendering assistance

to the perplexed minds of to-day and to the puzzled historians of to-morrow.

In the first place it is necessary to glance briefly at the inner circle of the Tsar's palace, and estimate the influence of the various members of the Imperial family. I wish to avoid, so far as possible, all reference to the private lives of Nicholas Alexandrovitch and of the members of his household. I am not concerned with their private lives; it is only as the Tsar of All the Russias that Nicholas II. interests me; and it is only in so far as the private actions of the house of Romanoff have influenced its policy that I mean to mention them.

I must preface the narrative which follows with a word of explanation. Some of the facts which I am about to relate are already known to the world, others are only known to a few. If the reader wishes to know how I obtained my information, I can only answer in the words of Diogenes, the cynic, who, when, arrested by order of Philip of Macedon and asked if he were a spy, replied:

"Certainly I am, O Philip! A spy of thine ill counsel and folly, who, for no necessity, canst set thy life and kingdom on the chances of an hour."

During the many years which I have spent in Russia I acted as a spy. I was employed by no King nor by any Government. I was in no man's pay. I was a spy for my own information and satisfaction, guided by my own free will, and reporting to my own conscience.

First, then, there is Nicholas Alexandrovitch himself, the head of the house of Romanoff. Weak, obstinate at times, fickle, a lover of flattery, a dreamer of dreams of good intentions—but only a dreamer, unstable, and with a goodly share of the intolerance of his ancestors. The Tsaritsa, his most estimable and devoted wife, is the mother of four daughters, and, at last, of the long-desired heir to the throne. But beyond this important fact she has no influence on the destinies of Russia, nor does the Tsar seek her counsel and advice. She is a good and amiable woman—and an unhappy one.

Of a very different stamp is the Dowager Empress Marie Dagmar. Self-willed, arrogant, and gifted with a violent temper, she exercises the most powerful influence over Nicholas. It is no secret that she regarded the marriage of her son unfavourably at the last minute, though she would seem to have acquiesced in it before. She clings tenaciously and fanatically to the memory of her husband, Alexander III., and forces his policy upon her son, who, had he been left to his own counsels, would have instituted probably a more enlightened administration. But the influence of his mother was too strong for him, and many of the appointments which he has made have been made under her direct commands. M. Pobiedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod, owes his continuation in office to the Dowager Empress. He had served Alexander II. and Alexander III.—therefore he must also be the first

adviser to Nicholas II. Siphyaghin, Goremykin, de Plehve, Muravieff, Bezobrazoff, Alexeieff, Obolenski, and many other notorious men, are all indebted to the Dowager Empress for their appointments. It is true that the influence of the Dowager Empress does not relieve Nicholas Alexandrovitch of one particle of his responsibility, but it is a factor which has been of incalculable importance during the ten years of his reign.

Nicholas II. has also many uncles, Grand Dukes, on whom, with nepotic piety, he has conferred important offices of State, which bring them in substantial salaries besides "perquisites"—and perquisites in Russia is a word of unlimited meaning, as the state of the navy and the scarcity of military and other stores clearly indicate.

The Dowager Empress and the Grand Dukes have introduced into the Court circle men of the calibre of Admiral Alexeieff, Prince Mescherski, M. Bezobrazoff, and many more of the same kind. It was the Grand Duke Alexander who appointed M. Bezobrazoff to the Russo-Chinese Bank, and thereby started him in life as a company promoter, with results which will hereinafter be related.

Now in the year 1898 there came to our shores from St. Petersburg a party of Russian noblemen and engineers, under the guidance of a certain prince. They settled themselves in hotels in the West End of London, and since they had not come to England for amusement they proceeded to

business. The object of their visit was to induce two capitalists in London to invest in gold mines on the Lena in Siberia. Now these two capitalists knew something of the district which was pointed out to them on the map as the area in which the gold mines were situated; they also knew that a certain Ratkoff Rajnoff, ex-Burgomaister of St. Petersburg, owned large tracts of gold-bearing land in that district; and they concluded that their capital was required to help forward the schemes of the said Ratkoff Rajnoff. Furthermore, they knew something about the ex-Burgomaister and, in consequence, would have nothing whatever to do with the scheme. Seeing how matters stood, the spokesman of the party informed the capitalists that they were mistaken in supposing that M. Rajnoff was the owner of the property in question; that, as a matter of fact, it belonged to a lady, who was no other than the Dowager Empress of Russia. But the mere propinquity of Ratkoff Rajnoff to the scene of the enterprise had alarmed the capitalists, and in spite of the exalted name of the owner they still held back, and the transaction collapsed. There is no reason why the Dowager Empress of Russia should not own tracts of gold-bearing land in Siberia, nor do I wish to cast any reflections upon her for endeavouring to obtain the necessary capital for working her mines in England. I have referred to this matter simply because it was the first of a series of similar transactions which came under my notice.

About six months after there came to London a Russian Count with a German name, who spoke French and wore clothes made in Bond Street. He represented a Russian syndicate which had a concession to build a railway from Vyatka to the Ural Mountains, also steamers for river navigation and iron works. To assist him to procure the necessary capital in England for these vast undertakings he engaged the services of a certain Jewish company promoter, whom I will call Morris. But British capital was not forthcoming, and Morris represented to the Count that the British public would not "come in" unless the company were registered at Somerset House. Now the Count was a poor man, and he was not acting for himself in the matter. The members of the syndicate which employed him were, for the most part, also members of the Russian Imperial family, and the man who was put forward as managing the affair in St. Petersburg was the first secretary to M. de Witte, but, as a matter of fact, he was only a cat's-paw in the business. To him the Count applied for the necessary funds to register the company in London on the understanding that English money would be forthcoming on registration. M. de Witte's secretary sent seven thousand pounds to the Count, and the company was duly registered at Somerset House, but still no English capital was subscribed. The Count was in despair, and consulted with the Jewish promoter, who assured him that the war in

South Africa was responsible for the backwardness of British capitalists. But that was poor comfort to the members of the Imperial family, who had sunk large sums of money in the syndicate, and the Count realised that he dared not return to Russia with such an excuse. Then Morris suggested that the Count should go to Paris and see what could be done there. Accordingly the Count, with a hanger-on whom he had brought with him from St. Petersburg, whom we will call Remyekin, and Morris all crossed the Channel and settled themselves in a hotel in Paris and set to work to collect capital for the Imperial Syndicate.

In the same hotel there was an American who appeared to be spending money lavishly, and whose cheques were honoured for large amounts. The Count became acquainted with the American, and it was not long before they were on intimate terms. Before a week was over the American had entrusted the Count with some money for investment in the great undertaking which he was endeavouring to float.

The Count and Morris and the hanger-on kept their expensive rooms at the hotel, until one fine day the manager took it into his head to present his little bill. Now the Count is an honest man ; but at the time it happened that he did not possess the nine thousand francs which were necessary to pay the hotel account. So he told the manager that his bill could not be paid until he received remittances from

St. Petersburg. The manager gave him three days in which to find the money, and instructed his servants that nothing more was to be supplied to the Count and his party without payment.

In the meantime the Count sent Remyekin to St. Petersburg for more money, on the pretence that subscriptions were beginning to come in, but that fifteen thousand roubles were necessary for current expenses. Remyekin presented the Count's request for money to M. de Witte's secretary, who, as I have already explained, was simply a figure-head and knew nothing about it. He told Remyekin that he must wait until he had seen certain parties and had laid the matter before them. Eventually Remyekin received a favourable answer, and telegraphed to the Count in Paris that he is returning with fifteen thousand roubles. The Count handed the telegram to the manager of the hotel, who agreed on the strength of it, to give the Count a week's credit. It was four days before Remyekin received the money, and on the fifth he started for Paris. Before handing the fifteen thousand roubles over to the Count he deducted three thousand which he had advanced to the syndicate for expenses, telling the Count that he had been obliged to pay it away in St. Petersburg.

However, the hotel bill was paid, the Count protesting that he was mightily affronted at the behaviour of the manager, that he was a Russian nobleman in the service of the Imperial family of

Russia, and that he was entitled to be treated with more courtesy and respect. The manager bowed again and again, asked a thousand pardons, and promised unlimited credit and abject service in the future; until at last the Count deigned to forgive him, and promised to continue his patronage.

The following night the Count gave a dinner party at the hotel. Among the guests invited were Morris, Remyekin, the American, the son of a certain ex-official of Petersburg, and a few celebrated Russians who happened to be staying in Paris at the time. It was a resplendent entertainment, such as only Russians can give when they don't know how in the world they are to pay for it. Several of the guests had decorations and crosses on their coats, and one wore a broad parti-coloured riband across his shirt front. The American, though he was possessed of plenty of dollars and a good digestion, felt decidedly cheap in the presence of so much splendour. Dinner over, coffee and cigarettes were served; and then to business. A Russian nobleman, who possessed not one cent in the wide world, and did not even know who would give him credit for his next meal, announced that he intended to subscribe a hundred thousand roubles to the Count's company. Whereupon the gentleman with the parti-coloured riband rose and addressed the meeting:

"I hear, your Excellency, that my friend Baron Briuloff has subscribed a hundred thousand roubles

to your company. As you know, my dear Count, we, all true and good Russians, feel honoured in being associated with the affairs of our Imperial family. I have much pleasure in subscribing fifty thousand roubles."

He sat down amid thunderous applause, and the son of the Petersburg official jumped up, and demanded to be entered for fifty thousand more. Whilst this was going on Morris and the American were talking quietly together of the prospects of the company, and of the distinguished Russian gentlemen who were taking up the shares with so much confidence. More champagne and liqueurs were ordered, and when the enthusiasm of the guests was at its height, the son of the Petersburg official jumped up again, and declared that, as he was leaving Paris the next day, he hoped the Count would accept a cheque from him for one-fourth of the amount of his shares, as a token of good faith. Whilst he was drawing the cheque a telegram was handed to the Count, who opened it with a great show of indifference, as though he were annoyed at the interruption of his social duties. Having read it, he handed it to Baron Briuloff. The effect of the message on that gentleman was electrical. Pushing over his chair he rushed towards the Count, and throwing his arms round his neck, kissed him fervently. The message was passed from hand to hand; and soon all the guests, except Morris and the American, were in each other's arms. The

contents of the slip of paper which had caused such a stir were as follows:

"St. Petersburg. 6 P.M.

"Count ——

"Take notice that Grand Duke Sergius has subscribed for 1,000,000 roubles. Princess Natalie for a like sum. More particulars follow by post. Reserve stock to the amount of 12,000,000.—LITOVITCH."

When the American read that telegram he was completely dazzled. His only fear was that there might not be any shares left for him beyond the few which he had already subscribed. He approached the Count diffidently, and requested to be allotted fifty thousand shares, promising to pay down ten per cent. immediately, and to get some of his countrymen to come into the company, if more capital were required. The Count was more than happy to oblige him, and before the party broke up the American was the hero of the hour. The guests stayed until an early hour in the morning, toasting the Tsar and the Imperial family—and the American, whom they saluted as *Nashi Americanitz* (Our American). When at last the party broke up, Mr. Morris took the American for a long walk before they retired for the remaining hours of the night, during which he expatiated to him on the brilliant future which lay before the shareholders of the great

company, and of the favours which they might expect to receive from the hands of the Tsar of All the Russias.

For some months after the eventful night the Count and Morris and the hanger-on remained at the hotel in Paris; but the American went to London, and settled himself at the Savoy Hotel. At last, the Count and his party, having exhausted the possibilities of Paris without obtaining any substantial additions to the capital of the company, returned to London, and renewed the acquaintance of the American, who still had unbounded faith in the company. The Count reminded him of his promise to secure American support for the undertaking, and he at once began to induce his countrymen in London to join in. Among his friends was a wealthy Chicago man, who was staying at the same hotel as himself. Now the man from Chicago had brains as well as money, and, though he was never inclined to let pass a good opportunity of making more money, he invariably brought a sound business capacity to bear on the matter; and being a good republican, he put no faith in Princes, Dukes, Counts or company promoters, as his guileless friend did. He allowed himself, however, to be introduced to the Count, who was highly delighted to make his acquaintance; and the conversation soon turned to the absorbing topic of the great company.

When the Count had taken his departure the Chicago man asked his friend how much money he

had invested in the undertaking, and various other questions of a searching nature, to all of which the American replied by enumerating the titles and decorations of the distinguished Russian noblemen, whom he himself had met at the great dinner in Paris, all of whom were subscribers to the company, and wound up triumphantly with the telegram from Petersburg which had been the cause of so great rejoicing on that occasion. The Chicago man remarked that he was very glad to hear it.

Two days passed, and the Count and Morris were becoming anxious to know how much money the Chicago man was to subscribe; so they went to the Savoy Hotel to interview him. The Chicago man told them that he intended to invest a hundred thousand pounds in the company; but before finally deciding he had thought it advisable to telegraph to a friend of his, a banker in France. When he received a satisfactory answer from him he would be happy to hand his cheque to the Count. The Count's face fell considerably, for these two Americans were his last hope; and if the French banker chanced to give an unfavourable report, the company would be the loser of one million roubles.

"Je n'aime pas à faire des affaires avec cet homme, car il y regarde de trop très!" he exclaimed irritably to the American. To which the American replied, that they were all more or less like that when they came from Chicago.

The next morning Morris called on the Chicago

man with apprehension, to learn the result of his inquiries. He went to the Savoy Hotel and was shown into his private sitting-room. The Chicago man was in his bedroom at the moment, and hearing some one enter the sitting-room, he called out to him to wait there until he had finished dressing. On the table in the sitting-room was a telegram, which the Chicago man had carelessly left there. The message ran, "For God's sake have nothing to do with it."

The next day Morris, the Jewish company promoter, was missing with all that remained of the capital of the great company. He has not yet returned. The poor Count, who had acted throughout in perfectly good faith—so far as he understood it—was thrown over by his employers in St. Petersburg, and, fearing that the climate of Russia would be injurious to his health, took a bed-sitting-room in Bloomsbury, where he still earns a precarious living by translating letters.

CHAPTER X

THE REAL CAUSE OF THE WAR—PART II

THE puzzled reader is at a loss to know how the shady methods of Russian and Jewish company promoters and the gullibility of a gilded American can have any sort of connection with the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East. His perplexity is reasonable I admit, but if the reader will grant me a little indulgence I will endeavour to clear up the mystery to his satisfaction. But before proceeding, there are one or two points in the two cases of Imperial company promoting which I have related to which I should like to draw attention. It may reasonably be objected that in both cases the names of members of the Russian Imperial family were used without authority by the agents in England for the purpose of misleading the British public, and that the Imperial family had nothing to do with either of them. To this I reply, that in the case of the Lena goldfields transaction, the representative who came to London to raise the capital was a Prince who is intimately connected with all the movements of the Court in Petersburg, and that his name alone is sufficient guarantee that he would not

have used the Dowager Empress's name without authority. As to the Ural mountain railway scheme I was myself informed by the secretary to M. de Witte that he was put forward to act for members of the Imperial family, and that he had nothing to do with the affair beyond transmitting communications between the principals and their agent, the Count. As regards the Count himself, though his methods savour of certain promoters in our own country who may be said to have one foot in the gaol, yet it must be remembered that they would be considered perfectly permissible in Russia. For a Russian he is an honest man; and he has a son who is in waiting on the Dowager Empress.

Lena and Ural railway, and steam navigation companies, and I know not how many more schemes, had failed; and their failure had entailed enormous losses on the private fortunes of certain members of the Imperial family. Something had to be done to recover the lost capital, and the Grand Duke Alexander found the man for the occasion in the person of M. Bezobrazoff. M. Bezobrazoff was convinced that millions of roubles were to be made out of Manchuria and Korea, if only the necessary concessions could be obtained and money to work them. M. Bezobrazoff has a very specious and plausible manner, and, undoubtedly, there was a great deal of truth in his assertions. The Dowager Empress and certain of the Grand Dukes entered very heavily into the scheme. The Tsar was

approached on the subject, and if he did not subscribe he at least countenanced it. Those who had lost money in the previous ventures were to be recouped a hundred-fold out of Manchuria and Korea. M. Bezobrazoff was to manage it, and there could be no doubt of the success of the undertaking, since the Tsar himself had given his assent. But there were two men who were kept in the dark as to what was going on—M. de Witte, who, for reasons best known to the Grand Dukes, was told nothing; and Count Lamsdorff, who, though he was not told, found out indirectly what schemes were in the air.

Then it was that the true Russification of Manchuria began in good earnest. Then it was that the Uryadniks were sent out into the villages to beat up colonists for Manchuria from among the poorest moujiks. Then it was that Dalny sprang from the ground, and Port Arthur began to flourish; Liaoyang became an important centre, and briquettes were manufactured from the coal-dust of the Yentai mines. The development of the country was pushed forward rapidly with money subscribed principally by the Imperial family. Dalny was fast becoming a town of importance, built of wooden houses in the Russian style, and furnished with all the accompaniments of Russian civilisation, including brothels and vodka.

Amongst the army of workmen who laboured incessantly with saw and hammer to erect the new

town, there were many Japanese, who had been sent over from Japan to report on the doings of the Russians in Korea. So that, whilst Dalny was springing up, Japan was preparing for a life or death struggle with the Power from the West which has absorbed all Northern Asia from the Urals to the Pacific Ocean.

About this time the Tsar was reminded of his promise to evacuate Manchuria by the representatives of other Powers who have interests in the Far East. At first the usual evasive replies were sent, childish excuses were urged for remaining in the country, and an easy-going world accepted the promises and excuses in the hope that there might possibly be a spark of good faith left in Russian diplomacy. But time went on—so did the Russification of Manchuria and the development of Korea. Pressure was once again brought to bear on the Tsar to fulfil his promise—and the band played upon the promenade of Dalny. But the pressure was severe, and Nicholas Alexandrovitch named a date for the evacuation of Manchuria. The Imperial family was thrown into consternation, for the evacuation of Manchuria meant the abandonment of the schemes in which they had sunk millions of roubles. They too brought pressure to bear upon the unfortunate Nicholas. The one trustworthy adviser whom he had, M. de Witte, had already been disgraced for venturing to suggest that the best policy which the Tsar could pursue was to keep his word.

There was nobody left to support him against his mother and uncles, and the wretched Nicholas gave way. The day named for the evacuation of Manchuria came and went, leaving the forces of the Tsar still in occupation.

There was one man, however, who, the Imperial family feared, might yet upset their plans, and whom they knew to be incorruptible—that man was Count Lamsdorff. He had not taken such a prominent part as M. de Witte in advocating the evacuation of Manchuria, being less outspoken and trained by years of diplomacy in Russia to observe a discreet attitude towards his Sovereign. But he is a man who would lend himself to no political jobbery, and who has no leanings towards men of the stamp of M. Bezobrazoff. The Imperial family, therefore, devoted their energies to the removal of Manchurian affairs from the hands of the Foreign Minister, Count Lamsdorff. In this they were successful. Whilst Count Lamsdorff was working day and night to avoid an open rupture with Japan, and employing all the diplomatic science of which he is master to that end, he was suddenly, at the eleventh hour, ordered to hand over Manchurian affairs to Admiral Alexeieff. Now, be it remembered, it was through M. Bezobrazoff's influence that Admiral Alexeieff was raised to the position of Viceroy in the Far East. In order to make Count Lamsdorff's position perfectly clear I shall quote his own words: "The project of a new agreement with Japan was entrusted

to General Adjutant Alexeieff, and is entirely out of my hands." Thus the last honest man was removed from the path of the Imperial family and M. Bezobrazoff. There was no one left in Russia to bar the highway to Manchuria; but at the far end of the road there was a nation prepared to dispute the right-of-way by force of arms.

With Alexeieff thrust into the position of Viceroy in the Far East like a veritable bull in a china-shop, all hope of a peaceful outcome of the negotiations with Japan vanished. Nevertheless to the last moment nobody in St. Petersburg dreamed that Japan really meant to fight. On the Thursday before the rupture the Tsar said: "All will be well; Japan will calm down. There is no danger of war. I began my reign in peace; I shall continue and end it in peace."

Alexeieff, Bezobrazoff and company were deceiving the Tsar to the last. On Friday morning the Tsar received a telegram from Alexeieff to the effect that Japan was merely "bluffing." Again on the Monday morning the Tsar was assured by his Viceroy that Japan was acknowledging the great strength of Russia, and had no idea of going to war. The Grand Dukes, convinced that Japan would never fight, were urging a policy of "bluff" on their nephew, whilst they continued to pocket the money which they received to maintain the army and navy in a state of efficiency. The bands still played at Dalny and Port Arthur, and Japan, after due warning of her intentions, which was not regarded, entered Port Arthur

harbour and crippled the Russian fleet. The telegram which the Tsar had received from Alexeieff on the Monday morning lulled him to a sense of security—clearly Japan would not fight. In the evening he was in the Imperial box at the Opera House, whilst a telegram was awaiting him at the Winter Palace, informing his Majesty that his Imperial fleet at Port Arthur had been torpedoed by the Japanese—and the signature to the despatch was "Alexeieff."

To sum up the situation in a few words. The reason why the Tsar did not evacuate Manchuria in accordance with his promise was because, by so doing, he would have brought financial ruin to certain members of his own family. The reason why there was war was because the Tsar did not keep his promise. Therefore, the real cause of the war was the financial speculations of the Dowager Empress and the Grand Dukes of Russia.

The same cause is responsible in part for the prolongation of the war. I have already mentioned the contributory causes. That the Dowager Empress and the Grand Dukes contemplated the possibility of war when they turned Alexeieff loose in Manchuria I do not believe; but now that it is war they desire to go through with it to the bitter end. There is nothing else for them to do. Meanwhile the apologists for the failures, military and financial, mutter the eternal *Nitchevo!* and complacently avow that Japan cannot win in the long run, and that when the Japanese are driven back to

their own islands, and are invaded by the Russian army — who will presumably swim across — the concessionaires in Korea will reap a thousandfold. It may be in five years, or it may be in fifty—meanwhile, *Nitchevo!*

Before quitting the subject of the war in Manchuria, and the causes which have given rise to it, and to the disasters which it has brought in its train, I shall give an example of the Russian Bureaucratic view of the matter. The following extract is from a St. Petersburg newspaper called the *Viedemost*, which is owned by a Russian Bureaucrat by the name of Prince Uchtomsky. The article appeared in that journal two weeks after war had been declared.

"The Russian mission in Asia is a mission of culture, but it should be a peaceful mission, not one of conquest. Foot by foot we have won by culture, and not by military occupation. We did not build the Siberian Railway from Vladivostok to Moscow, but from Moscow, slowly towards the Far East (the future Russian historian should make a note of that). . . . I do not fear naval or military defeat by the much over-estimated enemy, Japan. I fear the moral failure which will disclose itself when all the world sees that we are unable to give the new territories civilisation. (And well he may!) . . . I do not for a moment believe in the final success of Japan. They are brave and reckless: but after marching a distance of from twenty to thirty

kilometres they get demoralised. And the next thing that the Japanese troops do is to throw away their rifles. . . . The disparity in quality between our troops and those of the Japanese is so great that anything like ordinary warfare is not to be looked for, for the simple reason that our troops will simply slaughter the yellow race, and not fight them. The Japanese troops will take good care not to meet us in the open field, although at sea they may have some success. Japan, by isolating herself from the other yellow races, puts herself into the hands of the United States, and that is a neighbour whom we must take seriously. We have come into contact with them too suddenly; but we cannot go back. We are now too deeply engaged."

Comment on such puerile rubbish is unnecessary, but it fairly represented the opinion of educated Russians at the outbreak of the war. As to the civilising mission of Russia, to which the writer refers in such exalted phrases, she might as well have spared herself the trouble and expense of building the Siberian Railway, if that were the object of it, since there are more than a hundred million souls within her own borders who do not know what civilisation means.

CHAPTER XI

THE RUSSIAN NAVAL VICTORY

OF the outrage to British fishermen in the North Sea by the Russian fleet I find it difficult to write, for it has been the theme of all the journalists in the world. It has been treated from every standpoint, and more able pens than mine have already expressed the views which I hold on the subject. But, in reviewing the present state of Russia it is impossible, in justice to the Government of that country, to omit from my pages all mention of the one great victory which the Russian arms have obtained since the outbreak of the war. I am accused by my critics of bias and prejudice; but, at least, it shall not be said of me that I have suppressed the truth.

On the morning of October 23 there were a great many people who wanted to know the reason why the brave Russian Admiral Rosdestvensky had attacked a fleet of British trawlers in the North Sea and apparently gained a complete victory over it. Amongst others who felt curiosity in this matter was the British Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour; and, that he might be quite certain of a truthful

explanation, he telegraphed to the Tsar for it! Then he waited several days for the answer—having said that the matter admitted of no delay; and when at length it arrived, he announced to the expectant world that he was quite satisfied with it, and, further, that Nicholas II. was a most estimable monarch; but, at the same time, that the explanation given from the Russian side was a lie (only he used more refined language, as becomes a scholar) and an insult to this country. But the Tsar had promised an "inquiry" and punishment of the offenders, also compensation. The Baltic fleet blundered on to the South, and "our Mr. Balfour" was satisfied.

Does Mr. Balfour honestly believe that the assurance of satisfaction given him by the Tsar will be observed? If he does he must be a very ingenuous person, and quite unfitted for the post of Prime Minister of Great Britain. On the other hand, if he does not, he had no right to express satisfaction with the result of his protest, and thereby mislead the country in a crisis which affects the national honour. His long experience as a statesman precludes the possibility that he is ignorant of the ways of Russian diplomacy; indeed, in his speech at Southampton he hinted very strongly that he was well aware of them. And yet he stood up blandly before the people of Great Britain, and in the hearing of all the world, prattled platitudes about the virtues of Nicholas Alexandrovitch. If ever there were a case

which justified the Wonderland principle of "sentence first and trial afterwards," the Dogger bank outrage provided an unimpeachable example. But, where action was imperative, there were as usual words, words, words! And words there will be for months to come, until, to use an abominable phrase, the affair has "blown over" and the Tsar has once more wriggled out of his pledges.

That this will be the termination of the whole case is abundantly clear from the inspired articles in the Russian press which have appeared since the event, and from the actions of the Russian Government. The Tsar's promises of a full inquiry, reparation and punishment of the offenders are but a few months old; but already there are unmistakable signs of his intention to burke the question. In the first place, as regards full inquiry. Out of the whole squadron which took part in the shameful affair only four officers of junior rank were detained. Spain is a country celebrated for its goats, it was surely then superfluous for Admiral Rosdestvensky to land on the coast at Vigo four of the "scape" breed. However, they were landed and sent to St. Petersburg; but instead of being turned adrift in the wilderness, one, at least, of them has become a popular hero, whose bleatings are reported in the entire press of Europe. We are told by our responsible Ministers that it is no part of Great Britain's duty to get up the Russian case, and that the responsibility of clearing the honour of the Russian navy rests with Russia.

But whilst they are talking the Russian fleet, with the responsible officers on board, is passing Eastwards. Does any one suppose that the captain and three lieutenants who have been detained are really the only officers responsible? Has a Russian Admiral no responsibility for the behaviour of his squadron?

Then, as to the punishment of the guilty parties. The Russian press, inspired by the Grand Duke Alexis, declares that the very idea of punishment for the gallant victors of the battle of Dogger Bank is out of the question. We are told that we have made "an unfortunate mistake" in supposing that the Tsar ever intended doing such a thing. Scapegoat Klado is already on the pinnacle of fame; and doubtless Admiral Rosdestvensky is marked out for honours from the hands of his Imperial master, as was Colonel Gribski, the murderer of 15,000 Chinese at Blagoveschensks. I assert confidently that no Russian officers will be punished for the part which they took in the outrage on our fishing-boats. If the reader wishes to know the reason of my confidence, I will speak to him in parables.

A certain school-teacher was instructing her class in arithmetic. "If I were to lend your father five pounds," she said to Johnny, "and every year your father agreed to pay me back one pound, how much would he owe me at the end of six years?"

"Five pounds," said Johnny promptly.

The teacher expostulated, but Johnny held to his opinion.

"You don't know how to count," said the teacher.

"No, I don't know how to count," Johnny admitted; "but I know father."

It is the same with me. I may not know how to count; but I know the Tsar.

By their action in this matter Mr. Balfour and the Government have created a most reprehensible precedent. In future we may expect the Frenchman or German who murders a British subject in the streets of London to claim to be tried for the crime before an international court in another country. My critics will object that the cases are not similar, since the Dogger Bank is not in British waters. But, though we have long since regarded "Britannia rules the waves" as a nursery rhyme absurdity, nevertheless it is very generally recognised that the British fleet has important police duties to perform on the high seas, where half of the shipping of the world belongs to us. If the British fleet is not to put a stop to the destruction of our merchant shipping and to the murder of our fishermen in the highways of home waters, for what purpose do we maintain it?

The outrage was a matter to be dealt with by the fleet, and not by the diplomatists. When the Baltic squadron was safely anchored in Portsmouth Roads or lying at the bottom of the sea, then would have been the time for the diplomatists to talk about it—and they could have talked to their hearts' content. I venture to say that this is the course which the

United States would have taken under the circumstances, and the civilised world would have regarded the action with approval, or at least with silent assent. It is not surprising, therefore, that Admiral Dewey refused to serve on the International Court in Paris. I can almost hear him exclaim: "*O Farragut!*"

But here, in England, there is hypocritical nonsense spoken of magnanimity—which would be spelt more correctly fear. We turn up our eyes to heaven and call the world to witness our forbearance; and the world, very justifiably, laughs in its sleeve and prepares fresh humiliations for us. We quote our lists of battleships as evidence that we were not afraid of Russia, but we do not mention our army and the Indian frontier. We are miserable humbugs—and may the Lord have mercy upon us!

That Mr. Balfour wanted to do his duty no man of his supporters or opponents will deny. The pity of it is that he should have such a lamentable conception of the duty of the Prime Minister of Great Britain. There is one other incident in Mr. Balfour's negotiations to which attention should be drawn. It was stated in the press that Mr. Balfour was sent for by our gracious Queen Alexandra during the tension of the crisis. Now, looking to the relationship which exists between our Queen and the Dowager Empress of Russia, and to the gravity of the crisis, it is to be regretted that she should have

summoned Mr. Balfour at that particular juncture. Mr. Balfour had the honour of his country alone to consider. He was responsible to his King and to the people of Great Britain for his actions, and no other considerations should have been allowed to weigh with him. There is a passage in the teachings of Confucius which Mr. Balfour would do well to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest: "A great Minister is one who serves his prince according to what is right, and when he finds he cannot do so retires."

The outcome of it all will be that we shall have an International Inquiry in Paris, at which Russia will not produce witnesses of any importance; but she will seek by every means to prolong the case indefinitely. As to the character of the evidence which will be put forward on the Russian side we can gather something of its value beforehand from the spoutings of the irrepressible Klado; from the fact that the Russian Government has been advertising for witnesses; and from the attempted bribery of the men of the Hull fishing-boats. At the end of the inquiry—if there ever is an end—we shall be no wiser than we are now, because we already know all the facts of the case. The Tsar will pay some indemnity for the damage done by his drunken and irresponsible officers. The Russian Government will stick to the lie about the Japanese torpedo-boats, and the Tsar will refuse to punish the guilty parties. There will be no humiliation for Russia, and no

satisfaction for Great Britain; and then the affair will be said to have "blown over"! We shall then know that the value of the life of a British subject, if taken in cold blood by a foreigner, and more especially by an officer of the Tsar, is assessable in pounds sterling, and will be paid for after prolonged wrangling— What else can a nation of shopkeepers expect? The word *Nitchevo* should certainly be taught to the rising generation of Englishmen, and added to the language.

To revert once more to the character of the evidence which it is the intention of the Russian Government to lay before the international tribunal, I quote the following from a Central News telegram:

"It has come to the knowledge of the owners of the Gamecock fleet at Hull that during the past three weeks emissaries, alleged to represent the Russian Government, have been at Hull tampering with witnesses from the fleet. Their object has been to get fishermen to say the Gamecock fleet assisted the Japanese to conceal their torpedo-boats, and to give other misleading evidence. Fishermen have been taken to a house in Hull, drink has been given them, and when in an incapable condition they have been induced to make statements. Money has been scattered freely, the bribes in some instances amounting to five pounds. A clever trap was set, and it is asserted that abundant evidence will be forthcoming when the International Commission investigates the matter."

That is one quotation; and here is another which should raise a smile on the lips of the simplest of British subjects. It is from Reuter's Agency:

"Reuter's Agency is informed that the Russian Embassy has no knowledge whatsoever of the alleged attempts of certain persons to suborn witnesses at Hull in favour of the theory that there were torpedo vessels among the trawlers on the Dogger Bank when the Baltic Fleet encountered them."

Now let us admit that neither Count Benckendorff nor Count Lamsdorff nor M. de Witte nor General Kuropatkin nor the Zemstvos have any knowledge whatsoever of the attempted corruption of the Hull fishermen. But the question is, who did it? Is it likely that it was worth the while of any private individual to expend considerable sums of money in bribing the men to perjure themselves? So far, then, we know that it was not the Russian Ambassador, not the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, nor was it any private individual. Then who did it? The Russian secret police? But the police in Russia belong to the Tsar, and his is the responsibility for their actions. He has not, as yet, disavowed the operations of his subordinates—and we are waiting to know the truth. This responsibility of an autocrat for the administration of all the departments of State is not properly understood in a country which has been for centuries under a constitutional government; but it is the logical

conclusion of absolutism. There is no necessity for any man to be an autocrat; but so long as Nicholas II. clings to his autocracy, so long must he bear the burdens of it.

Two months after the outrage, which "admitted of no delay," the Commission met in Paris for the first time—and adjourned for about three weeks! And this is the sort of twaddle to which a respectable London journal treats its readers on the subject:

"Yesterday the first formal sitting of the Commission to inquire into the North Sea *incident* was held in Paris. (The reader will note that the dastardly outrage which brought Russia and Britain to the verge of war has already become "an incident.") The choice of a fifth Commissioner—the other four consisting of an Englishman, a Frenchman, an American, and a Russian—fell unanimously upon Admiral Spaun, of the Austrian navy. Although this selection was anticipated, the unanimity of the others is a good augury for the success of the Court of Inquiry. The silly people who talked about England entering into litigation on a subject affecting her honour quite unconsciously insulted the distinguished officers who accepted the invitation of their respective Governments to serve on the inquest. These eminent men will decide the issue submitted to them on its merits, and the ultimate verdict may safely be left in their hands. To assume that members of the Court will be influenced by national or political

motives is tantamount to asserting that an international inquest is an impossibility. And that pessimistic conclusion we decline to accept. (Nobody asked this dreary paragraphist to accept any pessimistic conclusions.) . . . Though there is abundant reason for believing that some effort was made to 'get at' fishermen of the Dogger Bank flotilla, we have no justification for assuming that this illicit work was encouraged or sanctioned either by the Government of the Tsar or by its diplomatic representatives in England. (Note the impersonal "*it*.") It has always been a difficulty in negotiations between two countries, that subordinate Russian agents have compromised the attitude of their superiors. We are as certain as we are of the integrity of our own diplomatic representatives that neither Count Lamsdorff nor Count Benckendorff has had anything to do with the alleged attempt to corrupt British witnesses . . . Of course, if the International Court finds that the Dogger Bank fleet secretly and purposely harboured Japanese warships, and rescued the survivors of a nefarious breach of neutrality, then the case against Russia will fall to the ground. If, on the contrary, as we believe, there is no foundation for this hypothesis, then the Court will find that the Russian Government owes not only an apology to Great Britain, but a most adequate compensation for the wrong done to her fishermen. (There is no syllable about the punishment of the offenders!) And this issue we may safely leave

to the distinguished members of the Court of Inquiry."

I give this quotation from a popular journal which supports the Government in its action in this matter, in order that my readers may have both sides of the question before them. It will be observed that in the short space of two months the "outrage" has become an "incident"; that people who deplore the humiliation of their country are "silly"; that the names of two honest men—Count Lamsdorff and Count Benckendorff—are dragged in to exonerate the whole gamut of corrupt Russian officialdom from the charge of bribery; that the responsibility for the bribery is without hesitation foisted on to the shoulders of "subordinate Russian agents"; that the possibility of the fishing-boats concealing, aiding, and abetting Japanese warships is admitted, against all reason and common sense; and finally, that the British demand for punishment of the responsible persons has been dropped. And these deplorable opinions are put forward in a journal which poses as a champion of British Imperialism!

Consider for one moment the fatuity of the suggestion that "the Dogger Bank fleet secretly and purposely harboured Japanese warships." Where did they come from? Is it possible that, in these days of Marconigrams, Japanese warships could have sailed from the Pacific Ocean to the North Sea without being reported *en route?* Or if they were built and manned in England, that they could have

left our harbours unobserved? The writer of the article which I have quoted might with more sense have written: "If the International Court finds that the Dogger Bank fleet secretly and purposely harboured red herrings and live bloaters, then the case against Russia will fall to the ground."

On January 9, 1905, the International Committee will meet again; but by that time the British public will have lost all interest in the affair. It will hold sittings twice daily for weeks and weeks, and the report of the proceedings in the British Press will become shorter as the days go by, until only a brief mention of the fact that the International Commission is still sitting will be found in odd corners of the newspapers. And that is all.

But looking at the lamentable fiasco as a guide to our future dealings with foreign Powers, it behoves us to consider what is going to be our attitude at the end of the war, when Japan dictates her terms of peace to Russia. We may be quite sure that Germany and France will endeavour to play the part of friend to fallen Russia, whilst they gain what advantage they can for themselves out of the situation. And what will Great Britain, who is the ally of Japan, do then? Will she stand by and see the fruits of victory wrested from the Japanese, as she did after the treaty of Shimonoseki? If we cannot stretch out our hand to defend our own honour, is it likely that we shall raise a finger to help Japan? If we are afraid of fallen Russia, shall

we dare to face the much-vaunted "mailed fist" of Germany? If only we had had the courage to take up a firm attitude in this matter, we might have prevented the intervention of other Powers after the final victory of Japan. But the other Powers know us too well to be deterred from their ambitions by the fleets of England, which do not fight, or by the army which does not exist, or by the statesmen who threaten but do not perform, or by the people who forget in two months the outrage to their honour.

CHAPTER XII

THE AWAKENING

For centuries the giant lay in a profound slumber; but it was not the sleep of quiet repose. Dreams of terror, of oppression, of a nameless fear haunted the hours of darkness—and all the hours were darkness. Sometimes he started spasmodically in his sleep, and called out—vague, incoherent cries for help; but no one answered, and he relapsed again into the lethargy of despair. Above him there sat always a solitary figure whom he worshipped, and who, in return, was cruel and tormented him. He was only a poor little creature, and the giant was huge and cumbrous; but, for all that, the giant worked for him, fed him on his own blood, clothed him with his own strength, and shielded him from harm. For he knew that the little man who sat above him held the keys of life and death, and of salvation and damnation after death. He was his Little Father, and if he were not a good giant he would chastise him, and chastisement was good for him. Therefore he made no complaint when the Little Father bandaged his eyes, and stopped his ears, and scourged him with the lash of injustice,

and trampled on him. Only now and again he cried out; but he always fell back into submissive slumber.

Deep down in his inner consciousness he knew that it was all a dream, and that some day he would awake. But this was the rule of the dream, that so long as he slept and the Little Father kept awake, he could never escape from his tyranny; but that if the Little Father slept he might be able to rouse himself and be free. The Little Father knew the rule of the dream, and for hundreds and hundreds of years he kept awake, and administered soporifics to the giant from little phials, labelled "Superstition" and "Ignorance." Only now and again during all the course of the dream did the Little Father nod his head in slumber, and then something always happened to him which made him start out of his sleep, and redouble his persecution of the giant who had dared to twitch the hem of his mantle.

But one day the giant noticed that the Little Father was getting very tired. He was just as capricious and cruel as ever; but a new phase had come over him, which took the form of expressing the best of intentions towards the giant whilst he continued to oppress him. The giant rubbed his eyes—"*Was it possible,*" he asked himself, "*that the Little Father was talking in his sleep?*" He managed with difficulty to remove the stopping from one of his ears, and listened. He found that he could hear voices now which he had never heard before—voices from far away which spoke of

freedom and liberty, and other things of which he did not know the names even. The Little Father was still saying how much he loved the giant, and what a lot of nice things he would give him some day; but the giant no longer heard him. The voices absorbed all his attention. As he listened their words became more intelligible and the accents clearer. The giant began to realise that the voices were outside of the dream; that they belonged to the world of reality, and that he was on the point of waking up after his long troubled sleep.

He tried to stretch his great arms, but they were still bound. He opened his eyes painfully—there was a mist before them. But he was waking, of that he was certain. Through the mist he looked at the Little Father, who, in spite of his promises, was torturing him unmercifully and trying to bleed him to death. The heavy lids were drooping over the Little Father's eyes, his head was inclined forward on his breast. He was already half asleep, and the giant waited patiently. They were both in the realm which lies between consciousness and sleep, the giant awaking, the Little Father sinking into slumber—the giant listening to the voices, and learning; the Little Father no longer hearing the voices of reason and reality, but only the unsubstantial murmurings of the bewildering dream.

He was standing alone in the great chamber of the *Natsarskoe Selo*, whose walls are decorated with the portraits of those who had been the Little

Fathers before him. They looked down upon him from their oval gilded frames with contemptuous pity, because he was lonely and forlorn. Fear was in his heart, and he was torn by divided counsels. He had promised so much, and done so little—there was always some one to drag him back from what he would accomplish, some one to remind him that he was the Little Father, appointed by Divine Power, and set upon a plane by himself with a divinity of his own which raised him above the giant at his feet. His destiny was inexorable—he must fulfil it. He must keep the giant captive for his son and his son's sons for all time—for that was the tradition of the Little Fathers. But he was a weakling, and fearful of the huge creature, and he was ashamed, and covered his eyes with his hands to shut out the grim faces which stared contemptuously at him from all sides. They had controlled the giant and kept him in check; it was his to follow in their footsteps. But without he could hear the groanings of the monster as he writhed beneath the tortures which he had inflicted upon him. The sounds which he emitted were becoming more articulate; from mere cries of pain they were turning to demands for redress. Louder and clearer the giant cried in the darkness—until, with a shout which echoed down the long corridors of the palace, he ejaculated the word "Constitution!"

In a childish frenzy the Little Father threw himself on his knees by the table.

"No, no!" he gasped. "I cannot depart from the path of my fathers. I cannot yield my divinity, and bring my infant son down to the level of a man. I cannot relinquish my autocracy—it is divine. It is I, and I only, who rule in Russia! I will give anything—anything but a Constitution! The word is sacrilege and an abomination! Mirsky! Mirsky! help me! Tell the Zemstvos that I will call them brothers, all my beloved brothers—but I cannot give a Constitution!"

Now, of course this is only a dream. The picture of the great autocrat, Nicholas Alexandrovitch, grovelling on his knees before the portraits of his revered ancestors, and in fear of the people of Russia whom he governs, is, of course, absurd. The world knows better than to believe such a lampoon of the estimable Nicholas II. But at this point the dream merges into reality. The Tsar is in the great chamber of the palace surrounded by the portraits, as we have imagined him in his dreams; Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky, his Minister of the Interior, is standing before him with a paper in his hand, and on the paper are written "Notes" of the draft Constitution which the Zemstvos discussed and adopted at their historic meeting in November 1904. The door opened and the Dowager Empress entered. She had heard that Prince Mirsky is with the Tsar, and she knew for what purpose he had come. She demanded to hear the document read which the Prince had brought from the Zemstvos. The Tsar,

prompted by a desire to assert himself, or because he had already heard more than enough of the precious document, objected.

"If you will not hear it, then go to your wife and babies. I wish to know what the Zemstvos really want!" the Dowager Empress exclaimed.

Prince Mirsky began to read the paragraphs as he had written them down; but presently the Dowager Empress interrupted him.

"You need read no more!" she said; and the Prince bowed himself out of the room.

Such is the history of the communication of the resolutions of the Zemstvos to the Tsar and his mother, as it was told to me by a gentleman who is in an exalted position in the palace of the Tsar. This and many other things he communicated to me as lately as the beginning of December 1904.

The draft of the Zemstvos bears the title, "The Fundamental Laws of the Russian Empire," and is to the following effect:

"At the head of the Empire is placed the Sovereign and the Imperial Douma. Freedom of religion, speech, press and meeting. Inviolability of person. The laws of succession to the Throne to remain the same. The Sovereign takes the oath to the Imperial Senate and the Douma. The Douma may remove the Sovereign on account of infirmity. The Douma determines the civil list. The person of the Sovereign is inviolable. The Ministers are responsible for the actions of the

Sovereign. To the Sovereign belongs the right of declaring war, making peace, and making treaties with other countries, of issuing orders (the *ukaze*) not in contradiction to existing laws, of dissolving the Legislative Houses, and of ordering new elections. The Sovereign is also Commander-in-Chief of the Army and the Fleet. The Imperial Douma consists of two Houses elected every three years: (1st) The House of Delegates of the Zemstvos; (2nd) The House of the People's Representatives. The Zemskaya Douma consists of delegates elected by the Zemstvos and the Town Councils. The House of the People's Representatives consists of delegates elected by general suffrage; secret and direct ballot. The franchise, as well as the right to sit in the House of Representatives, belongs to every male citizen over twenty-one; only the military and the police are excluded from the franchise. The members of the Douma receive a salary. Members of the Douma entering the service of the Government cannot sit in the Douma, Ministers excepted. The Douma makes decisions by a simple majority (except fundamental laws). Every member has the right of introducing a Bill, which must be accepted (1st) by the two Doumas, and (2nd) by the sanction of the Sovereign.

"At the head of the Executive Power is the Chancellor, who selects Ministers. The Ministers are responsible. Self-government of towns and villages by Town Councils and Zemstvos. The

members of the Zemstvos and of the Town Councils are elected by general franchise. Separation of judicial and administrative powers. The country is divided into constituencies according to the number of population. Elections take place on a Sunday appointed by the Sovereign."

It is not surprising that the "notes" of Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky taken from a document such as the above should have created a profound sensation in the *Natsarskoe Selo.* But what is to be done? How is autocracy to be upheld, when the Zemstvos, which represent the views of nobility and peasant alike, put forward such outrageous demands? Brute force suffered a crushing blow when de Plehve was shattered by the bomb of the fearless Sozonoff; but there are plenty of hyenas of the stamp of de Plehve left in Russia, and they must be impressed into the service of autocracy. There is Prince Obolensky, for instance, General Gribsky, Rodionoff, Pobiedonostseff, the Grand Dukes Alexis, Alexander, Michael and Sergius, and hundreds more who are willing to take the risks of office. But if there are hundreds of de Plehves left alive in Russia, there are also thousands of Sozonoffs, who have the sympathy and support of millions of the Tsar's subjects. There are, too, millions of cooler heads, who are waiting patiently for the opportunity which lies in the near future. They are of every rank and in every walk of life. Then what is to be done to uphold Divine Autocracy? Here

is Nicholas Alexandrovitch's answer in his own words:

"The desires for reform expressed by the St. Petersburg conference of representatives of the Zemstvos have been the object of discussion in the press and at different meetings, and, in contravention of the law, also in the town councils. Above all . . . the youths in different towns affirming the necessity of addressing various demands to the Government, which, in virtue of the unshakable foundations of the Russian State system consecrated by the fundamental laws of the Empire, are inadmissible, have organised stormy meetings and street demonstrations, and offered open resistance to the police and the authorities.

"Such a movement against the existing State system is alien to the Russian people, which is true to the old foundations of the State organisation. It is endeavouring to ascribe to the ferment a significance of a general aim which does not appertain to it. . . .

"The Government is obliged to protect the State organisation and public peace against any attempt to interrupt the normal course of political life. Steps must therefore be taken against any breach of order and peace, and against any meeting of an anti-governmental character, and this will be done by every legal means. The guilty persons . . . will be called to account before the law. . . . The press organs must, by a sober attitude in regard to events,

and by a consciousness of the responsibility falling upon them, contribute to the necessary tranquillisation of society."

Of a truth Nicholas Alexandrovitch dreams, whilst the giant is stretching himself in the hour of awakening.

A month ago I wrote a letter to a very great friend of mine in Rostoff, asking him many questions and for a speedy answer. I received in return a letter without signature, which bore the postmark "Rostoff." It contained only thirteen words in all—and they were a quotation from Bertrand Barère:

"The tree of liberty only grows when watered by the blood of tyrants."

Now, had my friend written me a letter of twenty pages he could not have answered my questions in a plainer or more convincing manner than was conveyed by those thirteen words. But what a terrible shadow they throw across the near future! There are people who exclaim: "Why, why must these things be, when, with a stroke of the pen, the Tsar could avert calamity and his own destruction?" Their reasoning is perfectly correct; but can any historian quote an example of an autocrat who has relinquished his power without bloodshed and murder; or of one who has given to his people freedom of his own will? The lust of power is stronger than any other human passion, and rides down all opposition to itself, nor will it yield a

hand's breadth until it is broken. There is no reasoning with autocracy.

There have been autocrats who were wise and great rulers, and who have earned the gratitude of their people—men great in war and in the arts of peace; but they have always been strong men. No greater curse can fall upon a country than to be ruled by a weak autocrat. "Wise Kings," said Diogenes, "have generally wise councillors, as he must be a wise man himself who is capable of distinguishing one." If, therefore, we may judge a King by the councillors that he keeps, what are we to say of Nicholas Alexandrovitch? I will not weary the reader by reciting the list of them again; I will only pause to remind him that the wise councillors of Nicholas are, as a rule, those who have been the shortest time in office.

Nicholas Alexandrovitch, as we have seen, is wedded to his autocracy, which he regards as a divine gift. It is sacred to him, and to relinquish it would be an infraction of the divine law. He knows by heart the formula of his great grandfather for the preservation of autocratic power—ignorance and superstition; and he has never relaxed the laws of the Censor and the Church which Nicholas I. devised and consolidated to be the main props of absolutism.

But it is more especially to the Church that Nicholas II. looks for assistance in maintaining himself on the throne; and, as a result of his dependence

upon it, the Orthodox Church has become the greatest scourge in Russia. In "Russia as It Really Is," I have already given some idea of the power of the Church and of the hold which it has on every sphere of Russian life. I can only compare it to a cancer (*carcinoma*), a petrified crab who sends out its feelers all through the system and poisons the life-blood of its victim. Such is the Russian Orthodox Church of which Nicholas Alexandrovitch is the God on Earth, with M. Pobiedonostseff, as his high-priest. It is a malignant growth which kills its thousands yearly, and enervates the whole life of the country. The rank fibres are creeping through a system of 130 millions of human beings, and poisoning them.

That the Church is the greatest evil in Russia is recognised by the prominence which is given to freedom of religion in the draft of the reforms recommended by the Zemstvos, where it stands first on the list and strikes the keynote of the whole document. Nicholas Alexandrovitch saw in that opening demand of the Zemstvos the blow which was being struck at autocracy. Houses of Representatives, local government institutions, a general franchise, all these reforms were as nothing to him as compared with the initial demand—"freedom of religion."

Like Dr. Doyen of France, who claims to have discovered the bacillus of cancer and the serum which will cure it, the Zemstvos have also found

the cause and the remedy for the malignant tumour which is eating into the heart of Russia. Dr. Doyen keeps his serum a secret—the Zemstvos have announced their cure to Nicholas Alexandrovitch and to the whole of Russia. The name of their serum is "Freedom of Religion." But Nicholas is by no means likely to attempt the cure of Russia by the remedy which is recommended to him. He will not even admit that Russia is suffering from the dire disease. There are, however, many learned men who have made up their minds to use the hypodermic injection, and it is only a question of the kind of needle that is to be employed.

Therefore the clause in the Constitution which demands freedom of religion is the main offence of the Zemstvos. Freedom of religion means for Nicholas Alexandrovitch a complete surrender of absolutism, since it is by the power of the Church that he is enabled to retain the throne of his ancestors and the status of a demi-god. Give freedom of religion to the people of Russia and in five years' time the Greek Church throughout all Russia would be powerless—as powerless as is the fleet of his Imperial Majesty at this moment. There would still, no doubt, be thousands of churches where the doctrines of the Greek Church would be taught; there would still be millions of men and women professing the faith of the Church; but the political power of the Church would be at an end. It would stand on the same footing as the churches of Rome

and Luther, or as the synagogues of the Jews, or as the temples of the Buddhists. Its power for evil would be broken, and the belief in the divine personality of the God on Earth would cease to exist.

It must be remembered that this belief in the divinity of the Tsar is a very real factor in the religious life of the great masses of Russia. "The divine right of Kings" by no means expresses the Russian peasant's veneration for the Little Father. To him it is the person that is divine rather than the rights of the person. The Greek Church teaches him: "As great as God is in heaven, so great is our Tsar on earth." Not for one moment would the Orthodox Greek Church allow that the German Emperor, who claimed in a speech to rule by divine right, is on an equal footing with the Tsar of Russia. I have seen the present Tsar's features enshrined in icons—Nicholas Alexandrovitch peering out from a tinselled halo, with golden beams emanating from his countenance like the petals of a sunflower! But if Nicholas were to grant freedom of religion to his people, those icons would have to be renamed and the features altered to suit the requirements of some more enlightened saint, who had not allowed his sanctity to be questioned.

Thrust down from Olympus to the plain of mere mortality, the temporal power of the scion of the house of Romanoff would soon suffer the same eclipse as his spiritual pretensions. Thus robbed of

his divinity and of his throne, Nicholas Alexandrovitch would wander helpless and harmless upon the face of the earth where once he was a god. Nicholas Alexandrovitch knows it, and M. Pobiedonostseff knows it, and that is the reason why the twain have set their faces rigidly against "freedom of religion."

Whilst the "Little Father" is nodding on his unsteady throne, the giant at his feet is rousing himself. Soon they will both be wide awake, and standing face to face. Meantime the giant moujik stretches his limbs and calls for a *stakan* of vodka, and declares that the Church must go! The cancer must be cut out at all costs. One wants a surgical knife for the operation, another is satisfied with an axe to do the work. But from St. Petersburg, Moscow, Kharkoff, Kieff, and Odessa the cry is the same. "The awakening! the terrible awakening!" The darkest hour lies yet before her; but the dawn is at hand when Russia will stand forth in the sunlight of liberty.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POWER BEHIND THE ZEMSTVOS

IN September there appeared in the *Nineteenth Century and After* an article under my name entitled "The Coming Revolution in Russia." This article attracted a certain amount of notice in the Press, and several of my critics questioned the possibility of a general rising in Russia on various grounds. One suggested that the country was too large; another, that the standing army constituted an insurmountable obstacle to the success of any revolutionary movement; a third pointed out that a revolution needs generals and soldiers, and not professors and thinking men, to make it effective. I do not propose to argue the question in detail with my critics; but since that article was written events have been moving very rapidly in Russia, and all the indications of the times point towards the conclusions which I formed as to the imminence of a revolution. The facts which I am able to record in this chapter will give my readers some notion of the great power which is behind the Zemstvos in their demand for a Constitution, and should satisfy them that the revolutionary party in Russia is anything

but a negligible quantity in the making of history in that unhappy country.

The meeting of the representatives of the Zemstvos, it will be remembered, took place in St. Petersburg on November 19–21. The meeting was held without official sanction, and passed resolutions of an ominous nature, demanding a Constitution. That such a meeting would have been allowed to assemble a few months before is out of the question. Then it was a crime for two or three to be gathered together in one place without the consent of the Politzmaister, and persons apprehended by the police at secret meetings were deported to Siberia without trial or investigation. And yet the Zemstvos, which are the nearest approach to a representative body in Russia, being composed of members elected from all classes of the community with exceedingly limited powers, dared to hold a meeting, without the consent of Tsar or Politzmaister, in St. Petersburg itself, and almost under the shadow of the late de Plehve's chair. There they drafted what will one day be considered an historic document, which they handed to the Minister of the Interior, with the request that he would lay it before the Tsar—and they would wait for an answer.

But it was not only the Zemstvos who suddenly developed such unheard-of audacity. The town councils in Moscow, and in various other towns, assembled and passed resolutions which would have

been regarded as seditious or treasonable six months before. Encouraged by the example set by the Zemstvos and town councils, a great meeting was held in St. Petersburg by the leading citizens of the capital, under the direction of M. Korolenko, the noted author. Maxim Gorky and many other men of letters were present, also many great advocates and men of all the learned professions. M. Korolenko, the chairman, led the shouts of "Vive la Constitution!" and "A bas l'autocracie!" which reverberated through the hall. The meeting was kept up until the early hours of the morning with the greatest enthusiasm. The shouts of "Down with autocracy!" were heard in the streets, and must surely have reached the ears of the Tsar's *gorodovoys* on their beats. And yet no one was arrested, nor was the meeting dispersed until it broke up of its own accord. Now, had this meeting been held in 1903 instead of 1904, every soul who was present at it, and who had not the good fortune to escape, would have been digging for gold in Siberia to-day.

Then what is the reason of this rapid change which has come to pass? Is the war responsible for it? Only to a small extent; but the great change took place when the butcher de Plehve was removed. His removal began a new era in Russia. No doubt the war has caused great discontent and misery throughout the whole of Russia; more especially have the plain moujiks been stirred to resentment by the calling-up of the reserves; but the new era

in Russia is not due to the war. Nor is the war responsible for the gradual drawing together of the different grades of society into a common bond of sympathy, to which I have already referred. The talisman which worked the wonder was the bomb of Sozonoff. Outside the immediate circle of his family and of Bureaucracy there is not a man in Russia who is not glad that de Plehve has gone. The glory of his removal is spoken of openly in the streets of St. Petersburg, and champagne is drunk in the restaurants to celebrate the end of Plehvism. It was the brutal policy of de Plehve which drove aristocrats, merchants of the guilds, and moujiks into fellowship; and it was the act of Sozonoff which inaugurated the new era.

But what has this to do with the power behind the Zemstvos? I will explain. When Alexander II. was assassinated in the streets of St. Petersburg, and was succeeded by Alexander III., a reign of terror began in Russia which has lasted until the present day. Early in the reign of Alexander III. a new party came into being, as the outcome of the oppression and afflictions to which the whole country was subjected by the Tsar. This new party had nothing to do with the Nihilists, who were being rigorously exterminated by the Government. It was a separate body, and whilst the Nihilists decreased in numbers, the new party daily gained in strength. The name of the party is immaterial, but we will call it the Revolutionary party. At the time

of the death of Alexander III. the little party had become a great society, with branches all over Russia and beyond the borders of Russia. It had brought into line kindred societies and absorbed them; and it has continued to increase and multiply until the present day, when it stands as the greatest force in Russia.

The Revolutionary party must not be confounded with the Nihilists and Terrorists, such as Vera Figner, Aschenbrenner, Ivanoff, and so on. They are not advocates of wholesale murder and terrorism —on the contrary, they prefer to save life rather than to destroy it. They are not monsters and reckless homicides; but, for the most part, quiet respectable citizens who are striving to obtain for themselves and their country the divine right of liberty. And they have set about it in a practical manner. The first step which they took was to collect funds, without which they realised that they could effect nothing. They have now many millions of roubles in London, a sum as great in New York, and more in San Francisco and Chicago. Be it remembered that these millions of pounds sterling have been subscribed by the Russian people themselves without foreign assistance. Contrast this with the needy Irish agitators who have to appeal to the sympathies of America to raise funds in order to carry on their campaign. It is not the poverty of Ireland that forces Mr. Redmond to beg like a crossing-sweeper in the United States; but the

weakness of his cause. In Russia the cause is good, and the money to back it is forthcoming from the people themselves.

Another way in which the members of the Revolutionary party in Russia show their practical common sense is by devoting themselves to their daily tasks, and refraining from words and actions which might compromise themselves or their neighbours. In the old days of terrorism, when a Nihilist was arrested, there were frequently found at his house or on his person incriminating documents, which led to the arrest of hundreds of others. But this cannot happen to members of the Revolutionary party, who are not required to carry loaded bombs about in their pockets, nor the visiting cards of all their acquaintances.

There is not a profession in the whole of Russia which does not contain members of the Revolutionary party. In the palace of the Tsar and in the hovel of the moujik good revolutionists are to be found. The army, navy, and all departments of State are full of them. In Russia alone there are three million members, without taking into account the numerous Russians abroad, who are mostly members of the society. The machinery which controls this huge engine of revolution works perfectly smoothly. Each State and Government in Russia has its head-quarters; and over them all is the Executive Committee, consisting of twelve men, who are to be reckoned amongst the cleverest men in Russia.

In the hands of the Executive Committee are the lives of the Tsar and his Ministers and Governors. Now let us see how they make use of their power.

M. de Plehve had for years carried on a policy of oppression and bloodshed as Minister of the Interior. A complete report of his doings was drawn up and placed before the Executive Committee, who, after due consideration of the evidence before them, wrote to de Plehve and warned him that his persecutions must cease. De Plehve disregarded the warning, and continued to carry out his policy. A second letter was sent to him, which was also disregarded; and so matters went on until the Kishineff massacre took place. A full report of that outrage came into the hands of the Executive Committee, which proved that de Plehve had actually instructed the head of the police in Kishineff not to interfere or stop the massacre of the Jews. Three weeks after the Kishineff affair de Plehve received a third letter from the Executive Committee warning him to make his peace with God, as the fate of Alexander II. awaited him. It was then that de Plehve increased his bodyguard fourfold, so that his life was protected more than that of the Tsar himself. His precautions enabled him to prolong his life for a year; but on July 28, 1904, he met his fate at the hands of Sozonoff in front of the railway-station in St. Petersburg.

Siphyagin and Bobrikoff were removed in like manner, after due warning from the Executive

Committee, and others whom I need not mention. The sentence of the Executive Committee is arrived at by ballot. The members of the Committee need not all be present at the deliberations, but they must all be represented, either in person or by proxy. The ballot box is passed round, and if there is one white ball found in it the life of the Minister who has incurred the displeasure of the Committee is spared. De Plehve's life was balloted three times before he was condemned.

There are Ministers and Governors in Russia who are wise enough to take to heart the warnings of the Executive Committee. The Grand Duke Sergius, Governor-General of Moscow, incurred the displeasure of the Executive Committee by some act which he accomplished on August 19, 1904. He was given the choice of three alternatives—to mend his ways—to resign—or to make his peace with God at the earliest opportunity. He appears to have given the matter his earnest consideration, and to have made up his mind that he is not prepared to meet his God. He has therefore to take his choice of the first two courses.

Prince Obolensky, after his first speech as Governor-General of Finland, was advised by the Committee that if he intended to follow in the footsteps of General Bobrikoff and to repeat his own record in Kherson, he must be prepared to meet speedy justice; as the prolonged warning which was given to Bobrikoff would not be allowed him. He

received that notice on August 11, 1904; and not being made of the same stuff as de Plehve and Bobrikoff, he flew at once to St. Petersburg and requested an audience with the Dowager Empress, and afterwards with the Tsar. He subsequently returned to Finland, and, to the time of writing, we have heard nothing more of him, nor do I know what course he has made up his mind to pursue.

The Grand Duke Constantine, who is the head of the military schools in Russia, determined to coerce the Jews and Protestants by excluding them from material benefits appertaining to military affairs; and in consequence of his action in the matter M. von Saenger, the Minister of Education, resigned. On June 23, 1904, Grand Duke Constantine received a communication from the Executive Committee stating, that they have nothing against him in respect of the large sums of public money of which he is the administrator, and for which he is unable to account; but that his attempts to persecute Jews and Protestants, with whom he has nothing in common, must cease. They therefore had the honour to inform him that unless he put an end to these practices he would come into conflict with the members of the Committee. The Duke took the hint.

Now as regards the demands of the Zemstvos for a Constitution. The Executive Committee know perfectly well that Nicholas Alexandrovitch will not grant it. But it is a great thing for them to know

that the meeting of the Zemstvos was held without interference, and that the resolutions passed by the meeting were brought to the notice of the Tsar by the Minister of the Interior. They can feel that the Revolutionary party has effected something at least, in the interests of freedom of public meeting and of speech, by the removal of de Plehve. They know, too, that though Nicholas Alexandrovitch will refuse the demands of the Zemstvos for a Constitution, a time will come when he will be only too anxious to grant his people a Constitution. But when that time comes it will be too late; for the reason that Nicholas will then have nothing to give, nor will he be consulted. In fact, Nicholas Alexandrovitch will have about as much to do with the granting of free institutions to Russia as Charles I. had to do with the Habeas Corpus Act.

The Executive Committee keep the Tsar informed of all their movements. He was notified of the impending fate of de Plehve, and of the reasons for his removal. He found the letter, four days before de Plehve was killed, on the table of his private study. The Tsar read it, and handed it over to M. Muravieff, the Minister of Justice. On the day of de Plehve's execution the Tsar found another letter on his table, sealed and signed by the Executive Committee, calling his Majesty's attention to the fact that de Plehve had been executed according to justice. The assassination of de Plehve and the warnings of the Executive Committee completely unnerved the

Tsar, and for two days he was prostrated by the shock. Perhaps he remembered that, as autocrat of Russia, he was responsible for all the actions of his late Minister, and that had he restrained him in his bloody policy de Plehve might still have been his Minister of the Interior.

On October 27, 1904, the Tsar was advised by the Executive Committee of the terrible corruption which is being practised by his uncles and cousins, the Grand Dukes of Russia; and how, in consequence, the army in Manchuria is being starved, or fed on inferior rations, whilst the provisions which were intended for the soldiers are being sold in the interior and on the German and Austrian frontiers. So Nicholas Alexandrovitch knows all about that.

On October 31, the Executive Committee pointed out to the Tsar that the boots which had been ordered for the army at a cost of three roubles per pair had arrived in Germany and were in use, but not by his own soldiers. So Nicholas Alexandrovitch knows that.

On November 7, the same Committee reported to the Tsar that certain arsenals and storehouses in Moscow, Kieff, Kharkoff, and St. Petersburg were absolutely empty, whilst, in consequence, the pockets of certain of the Grand Dukes were full. So the Tsar knows that.

On the 16th of the same month, the Tsar was informed that if a hair of the head of Sozonoff were

injured, he would surely pay for it with his life. And Sozonoff still lives.

On December 5, 1904, his Imperial Majesty received a lengthy communication, with four seals upon it, dealing with the rights of the people and liberty, advising him that, for his own sake and for the sake of his children, he should break away from the counsels of the Dowager Empress and M. Pobiedonostseff, and from the influence of the Grand Dukes, his uncles and cousins, and become master and monarch of his own free will. Further, that he should stop the war with Japan. The communication ended by reminding him that he had no better friends than the people, who were keeping him informed of everything that is taking place in Russia.

Since Nicholas Alexandrovitch came to the throne in 1894, the Executive Committee of the Revolutionary party have saved his life on five occasions. He would have been assassinated on the very day that his second daughter was born, but for the Executive Committee. He would have been poisoned a week before he started on his visit to France, but for the Executive Committee. His life was saved by the same agency in January 1901. Two attempts on his life were planned between 1901 and 1903, and both were frustrated by the Executive Committee. Yet the two men who sought to kill him are to this day in his service at the palace. On the occasion of the Tsar's last visit to the South of Russia members of the Revolutionary party

accompanied him, who were prepared to shield him at the cost of their own lives, if an attack had been made upon him.

It is evident then that the Revolutionary party in Russia are not murderers and Anarchists. They only take life when it is absolutely necessary for the welfare of the people of Russia. The justice which they mete out is infinitely more merciful than the arbitrary decisions of the Tsar and his Minister of Justice, and it is founded on the most convincing evidence. Call it lawlessness if you will; but in a country where arbitrary power frames statutes to meet its own requirements, without reference to conscience and moral right; where innocent men and women are arrested and sent into exile without trial; where equity is swallowed up by corruption, and the liberty of the subject is falsely sworn away —in such a country who shall say that lawlessness is on the side of the reformers?

Thus the great Revolutionary party in Russia is working quietly and steadily towards its goal, and accumulating treasure against the day when it will be needed. With the sound common sense which characterises their actions, they believe that the battle is half won when the sinews of war are in abundance. They discourage, as far as possible, premature riots and acts of violence organised by irresponsible persons. They only desire that all should await in tranquillity the signal of the Executive Committee.

Now before quitting the subject of the Revolutionary party and their methods, and the manner in which they keep the Tsar informed of their doings, here is a little incident which I think it is worth while to mention, as it may be of interest to some of my readers, and more especially to two of my critics. When my book, "Russia as It Really Is," was published in the summer, the gentleman who reviewed it in the *Times* expressed deep disapproval of the tone of the book. So pained was he by it that he dismissed it in less than a dozen lines, concluding: "The book ends with an 'Open Letter to the Tsar,' which, we suppose, is intended as a joke—but it is not a good one." In a similar strain the reviewer in the *Academy* winds up his remarks with the words: "Mr. Joubert ends with an 'Open Letter to the Tsar,' which it is as well that the Tsar is not likely to see, for any leanings towards freedom would be checked by the pompous inanity of the style in which the author preaches." Now, whilst regretting the pain and annoyance to these gentlemen which my open correspondence with the Tsar caused, I cannot help thinking that they may be interested to know that a copy of "Russia as It Really Is" was in the Tsar's possession on July 18. The book was placed in his private sitting-room by the same hand which delivered the letters of the Executive Committee; but, unlike those letters, my book was not handed over to M. Mouravieff. I have reason to believe that Nicholas Alexandrovitch did not regard

my letter to him as a joke; and I trust that my critic in the *Academy* will not attribute to my "pompous inanity" the refusal of the Tsar to grant any reforms to his unfortunate subjects. Having read my book, the Tsar handed it over to the Tsaritsa—the Dowager Empress already had a copy, but I am unable to say when or how she obtained it. Two hundred and fifty copies of "Russia as It Really Is" arrived in Odessa in August, and fifty reached Warsaw in October. It was translated by a man in Odessa into Russian, and it has also been translated into Polish; but I am certain that the words *Dosvoleno Tsensoroyou* do not appear on the title-pages of the translations.

It is a remarkable fact that the person or persons who place in the Tsar's private room the letters of the Executive Committee and circulars, books, and periodicals for his notice, have never yet been discovered, though spies and detectives watch with deadly anxiety all the inmates of the palace and each other. The arrival of these mysterious communications has come to be regarded by Nicholas Alexandrovitch as part of the routine of life. I am told that he sometimes asks, "Has my Cabalistic news arrived?" when he looks over his correspondence. The day is not far distant when the Tsar will recognise that his enemies were more merciful to him than his friends.

A few weeks ago a friend of mine who is a partner in a large business in Manchester, and who does a

great deal of travelling for his firm, called on me in the afternoon and told me that he was leaving that evening for the Continent, and that he expected to have to go as far as St. Petersburg before he returned. Could I give him a letter of introduction to a friend in the Russian capital? As he was leaving he glanced at the books in my bookcase, and asked if I would lend him two, which he took out, promising to return them to me when he came back. The books which he had selected were a Telegraphic Code and "Russia as It Really Is." I cautioned him about the latter, and told him what he should do when he arrived on the Russian frontier. A few days ago he called again and returned me one book only. It was the Telegraphic Code which had been confiscated, and not my book. It appears that when he arrived at the Russian frontier he remembered my instructions, and handed to the official who was examining the personal baggage of the travellers something *na chai*. The officer, wishing to show his zeal in the performance of his duties, glancing at the two books, selected the Telegraphic Code as a suspicious volume—though he could evidently read and speak English—and confiscated it. He then took my friend's name and address, in order that the code book might be returned to him in the event of its not proving to be a dangerous book. But apparently the code aroused the suspicion of the authorities—for it was not returned to him.

CHAPTER XIV

THE POWER BEHIND THE ZEMSTVOS (*continued*)

I PROPOSE in this chapter to give the substance of a conversation which I had recently with a man who is one of the prime movers and a great power in the Revolutionary party in Russia. But first let me introduce him to my readers, as nearly as I can without disclosing his identity. He is a man whom I have known for many years, and no chance acquaintance of the hour; and therefore I have the utmost confidence in presenting him as a reliable authority, in whose word my readers may place implicit faith.

My friend was not born in Russia; but his parents removed to that country when he was about three years old. His father was a manufacturer and a millionaire; and when he settled in South Russia he bought extensive works, which are now the property of my friend, since his father is dead. I shall not mention the exact nature of the business; but I have his permission to state that he was educated in Germany, and that having a natural turn for engineering he took an active part in his father's business, which he has enormously increased, extending

it to England, Belgium, France, and America. From this it will be seen that he is a clever business man, and I can add that he is as active and cool-headed as any man whom I have ever met. But besides being a great man of business, he is also a great revolutionist. He loves Russia with all his soul, and, in consequence, hates Bureaucracy with a holy hatred. Nowhere in the world can a greater enemy to the present form of government in Russia be found. In all his works in Russia he employs Russians only, even his engineers are Russians; and it is only when he is unable to find Russians who are competent to do the work that he will engage foreigners. In America alone he employs more than three thousand men—and more than two-thirds of them are Russians who have emigrated. In Russia he employs eighteen thousand people. A year ago I sent a young engineer to him in Russia with a letter, asking him to find him employment if he could. He wrote in return to say that he had found a place for my *protégé*, but not in his own works. He then explained that he only employed Russians, not merely for the love of his countrymen, but with a certain object in view. I knew what his object was, and I said no more about it. He lives, works, and saves money by the millions of roubles with only one purpose—the liberation of Russia. And though he is the gentlest of men, yet he is one of the greatest powers with which Bureaucracy will have to reckon. He was in London a

short time ago, and I had the opportunity of a conversation with him, the substance of which I shall now relate.

I began by asking him about the labour riots and the disturbances by University students which have lately been taking place in Russia. He laughed at the mere mention of them.

"They are nothing but a pack of hot-headed children," he said, "who act on the impulse of the moment. They can do nothing to further our cause." He laid a peculiar stress on the words, as though they were sacred to him. "They are useless—absolutely useless, for the reason that it is not on those lines that we are working. It is not a students' riot nor a labour demonstration that will free Russia."

"Then what is your plan?" I asked.

"Oh! the same as it has been for the last ten years. Money, money, and more money! We have not got enough yet—we must go on collecting. The more gold we can collect, the fewer lives will be sacrificed. But I am certain there is no way out of bloodshed—no way out of it. Money is the first consideration. It is the great commander in whom we must trust to begin with. There are plenty of military commanders of all ranks in our party when they are wanted later on; but money is our first object."

I asked him about the officers of whom he had spoken.

"We have officers enough, not only in Russia but

in foreign countries as well. Some are serving in voluntary armies both as officers and soldiers—for instance, in the United States army there is a good number in every State of the Union. They are, of course, naturalised citizens of that country; but they are Russians first, last, and all the time; and they will come when they are wanted. In England it is the same; and in France, Germany, Switzerland and Holland we have heaps of men. The South American Republics? Why, man, we have fourteen thousand in South America and Mexico! When we get to work I do not think that foreign countries will have many complaints to make about the influx of immigrants. Russian emigrants will return to Russia by the thousands, and it will soon become known that Russia is a large country with great possibilities for settlers, and we shall attract a host of foreign immigrants, and, so long as their papers are clear, we shall not turn them back."

"When will that be?" I asked.

"I don't know," he answered. "I am only saying what may take place some day. We are not allowed to know when, you understand?" he winked at me slyly, in spite of his disclaimer. "Now, to return to the question of the money," he continued. "Nothing can be had in this world without money—even death has to be paid for. If we are to succeed, as of course we shall, we must have money."

Knowing as I did that the man who sat talking to me had every advantage in life that it is possible

to possess—health, a good disposition, enormous wealth, many friends and so forth, I could not help wondering how it was possible for him to stake everything on such a venture. He bears no personal animosity to the Tsar, nor, to the best of my belief, has there been any incident in his life which would account for his bitter enmity to the Government. And yet he is devoting all his wealth and energies to the liberation of Russia from the yoke of autocracy. How many men with his advantages would have chosen such a dangerous hobby? But here was my friend at the age of forty-five still a bachelor, and with no love but the freedom of Russia. By all the laws of social humanity he ought to have married and made some good woman happy. I said something of the kind to him, and he laughed good-naturedly.

"Make a woman happy, eh? Raise a family? Settle down like an old English squire? And pass the remainder of my days in over-eating and killing birds and foxes? A house in London, and a stable full of horses—and the Riviera for a change when your cursed climate becomes unbearable? A pillar of the Church, a Justice of the Peace, possibly a Member of Parliament? I know your English ideas of enjoyment—but they are not for me, thank you!"

Then he turned the tables on me. He reminded me that had I pursued the career which was marked out for me by my parents I too should have been

a pillar of the Church and various other estimable things; whereas, he pointed out, I had wasted my youth in acquiring dead, absolutely dead knowledge; I had become a tramp in my maturer years; and finally I had taken to writing obnoxious literature.

"But at least," I said, "my scribbling is not detrimental to your cause—you will admit that!"

"Certainly I will!" he answered. "But do you write for the love of it, or for the remuneration which you receive?"

"I hardly know," I said. "Perhaps for both reasons, though I am not clear yet about the remuneration, or the proportion it bears to my shoemaker's bill. But, nevertheless, I am doing it."

"Precisely!" he answered triumphantly. "You write because you must write. The why or wherefore does not concern you—you only know that you are doing it, and that is enough for you. It is the same with me, except that I have an incentive which you lack. You must remember that Russia is my country. I was brought up there, and I have spent the best part of my life among the people. When I first took charge of my father's business I had no idea what Russia really is; but before two years had passed I found out all about it. I soon discovered that if I offered for a contract I was obliged to add two-thirds to the cost price, so as to be able to satisfy the demands of the officials. I found out how the officials rob one another, in order that all may live. From the highest in the land to

the lowest they all do it—it is only a matter of degree. But I do not wish to lay too much stress upon that point. So long as there is gold in the world, there will always and everywhere be robbery and unjust dealing. Russia has no monopoly of the curse—you will find it in England and America too, though in a lesser degree. But I found out things about Russia in the course of my business a hundred times worse than bribery and corruption. I found out the slavery and misery of the lives of the workers in Russia. I found out the needless and irritating restrictions placed upon the liberty of the subject. I found out how the Government cramps the intellect of the people, so that a man may have no chance of rising above his class. I found out a hundred things which people in a free country, such as England, would refuse to believe possible.

"It makes my blood boil when I hear men in civilised countries calling our moujiks ignorant brutes. Who makes them brutes and ignorant? Your people, as well as our aristocracy, call the Russian Jews 'dirty Jews.' Who makes them dirty? Then, when the 'ignorant' and 'brutal' moujiks fall foul of the 'dirty Jews,' as they did at Kieff, Kharkoff, and Kishineff, the world calls them bloody murderers—but who makes them murderers? You know the answer as well as I do. You know that it is the Government which fills up the moujiks with tschisschinna and vodka, and incites them to these crimes. And you know that

the Government is responsible for all the misery and for most of the crime in Russia; and you are perfectly right in asserting that Government, Church, and the Tsar are all one.

"Now, with all these facts confronting me, and seeing daily tears and blood congealed on the faces of my workers, can you wonder that I am trying to do what I can to set things right? My one object is to accumulate enough money to be of real assistance to Russia. When business is good and money is coming in freely, I thank God for the sinews of war—for the purchasing power of so many tons of explosives, of so many rifles, or whatever it may be. I derive as much satisfaction from the accumulation of wealth for this object as any man who is piling it up for a spendthrift son to squander. I know that my fortune will not be squandered. I hope some day to make a good woman happy, as you suggested—that woman is Russia. But if I do not live to see the day of her happiness—if I die to-morrow, at least I shall die with the knowledge that I have done something to serve her, and that her ultimate happiness is assured in the near future.

"Meanwhile it is a satisfaction to me to know that in every barrack in Russia our literature is being distributed to the soldiers; that we are educating the peasants, so that they are beginning to realise who are really their friends; that the icon is losing its lustre, and the pope of the Orthodox Church his influence. These are little things, but they are important;

they mark the beginning of the change which is coming over the peasant class in Russia."

When I pointed out to him that there are a great many people in this country who regard anything like a successful revolution in Russia as an impossibility for various reasons which I gave him, he smiled.

"Let them think so, by all means; they are rendering us a service by allaying uneasiness. It is not likely that we are going to give out our plans to the world at large."

I then questioned him on the recent meeting of the Zemstvos in St. Petersburg and their demand for a Constitution, and asked whether he thought there was any possibility of the Tsar granting it. "You ask for my opinion," he said, "but it is not a matter of opinion, it is a certainty that the Tsar will not accept the draft of the Constitution under any consideration. He will give a diplomatic and evasive answer, which will be dictated to him by the Dowager Empress and Prince Mirsky. That is to say, the Dowager Empress will dictate one answer and Prince Mirsky another, and the Tsar will endeavour to strike a happy medium after consultation with Pobiedonostseff and some of his uncles. Meanwhile the Zemstvos are waiting the Tsar's decision before they go further."

The description which my friend had given of the way in which Nicholas Alexandrovitch makes up his mind recalled to me a story of a certain

American judge. He was sitting at home with his wife when the plaintiff in a case which was to be tried before him the next day entered. The plaintiff poured out the story of his wrongs, and the judge listened attentively, pocketed the twenty dollars which the plaintiff handed to him, and said, "You are right!"

Hardly had the plaintiff left the judge's house when the defendant in the same case entered; and he too began to unburden himself to the judge, who with the greatest impartiality listened, pocketed the twenty dollars which the defendant handed to him, and said, "You are right!"

When the defendant had taken his departure, the judge's wife looked up at her husband over the top of her spectacles with a puzzled expression. "My dear," she said, "the first man gave you twenty dollars and you said, 'You are right!' And the second man gave you twenty dollars and you said to him too, 'You are right!' But to-morrow one of the two will have to be wrong."

And the judge looked up at his wife and answered, "You, also, are right!"

But to return to the conversation with my friend.

"The Tsar," he said, "is a reformer attached to a string. When he arrives at the brink of reform, his mother and Pobiedonostseff pull him back. But it no longer matters to us what he does, or what ukases he is pleased to issue. We are past that stage, and nothing will prevent us going on steadily

towards the end, as we have done in the past. It is all the same to us. You can take it from me that nothing less than a Constitution, such as you have in England, will satisfy us. If Nicholas Alexandrovitch is willing to grant it, well and good. He would remain as our King, but not as Tsar—the word must be abolished. If Nicholas wishes for bloodshed, he shall have it. But when it is all over there will be no talk of limited monarchy; it will then be a Declaration of Independence, on the lines of the United States; and a Romanoff in Russia, if there be one, will be of no more account than a Duke of Vermont, U.S.A. To that effect Nicholas Alexandrovitch will receive due notice, and he can take his choice which it is to be.

"Personally, I prefer a Constitution on the lines of the United States to anything else; and let the Romanoffs take a long-needed rest. But there are others who hold different views, and who would be contented with a limited monarchy, if it will prevent the shedding of blood. But we mean to have one of the two."

CHAPTER XV

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

THE conversation which I have recorded in the last chapter is interesting as showing the views held by a prominent member of the Revolutionary party in Russia; but it is not for the expression of opinion alone that it is instructive. There is another aspect of the case to which I should like to draw the attention of the reader. This man is sacrificing everything for the freedom of his country, not with any idea of ambition or revenge but from purely unselfish motives. I know him to be one of the gentlest of men; I have known him to suffer unjustly in order that others might escape punishment; he is charitable, sympathetic, and a "good fellow." And yet he prays God daily that his wealth may increase, for no other purpose than to enable him to purchase weapons of destruction to overthrow the Government of his country. Now what are the ethics of his case? Is he to be classed with regicides and anarchists, an enemy of society; or as a patriot and philanthropist? I have no hesitation in answering the question—his motives are self-sacrificing, his aim the amelioration of humanity, his means the only

means possible in the circumstances. Unquestionably the man is right.

There are in Russia to my knowledge more than fifty such men as my friend—rich, powerful, and with only one aim in life—the liberty of Russia. The men of whom I speak, who would be considered very rich in any country in the world, could make their homes in England or America and be prosperous and happy citizens with every advantage that money can give. Their wealth would ensure for them influence and popularity; their good breeding and education, generally acquired in foreign universities, would enable them to select their friends from any class of society. And yet these rich men have devoted themselves to the cause of freedom for Russia. Now, when I hear people talking about self-interest and self-love, I think of these men in Russia who are devoting everything to the good of their poor fellow countrymen. Their philanthropy is not advertised to the world, for very obvious reasons. They receive no recognition of their services in the cause of liberty. They have no decorations nor crosses to show for it. But they are content to sink themselves and their interests and pleasures for the cause to which they have devoted their lives. When we think of these rich men in Russia we need no longer despair of selfish humanity nor of the liberty of Russia.

It is impossible to believe that Nicholas Alexandrovitch and the Imperial family and the whole

Bureaucracy of Russia are blind to the signs of the times, nor can they appeal to the world's sympathy on the grounds that they are being kept in the dark as to what is going on in Russia under their eyes. Nicholas Alexandrovitch cannot be ignorant of the fact that the Zemstvos are not by themselves in their demand for a constitutional form of government, and that the demand is no mere caprice of these men. Does he know that the Zemstvos have sworn never to retract their demands? Is he ignorant of the fact that in every barrack in Russia revolutionary literature is being distributed to his soldiers, and eagerly read by them, or listened to by those who cannot read? There are many officers now considering on what terms they will be prepared to join the Revolutionary party. In some regiments the officers read the orders to their men which are being extensively promulgated, admonishing the men to avoid revolutionary tendencies and to place implicit confidence in the beneficence of the "God on Earth"; but they themselves distribute in the barracks revolutionary pamphlets and treasonable literature which are sent to the men under the guise of letters and parcels, without inquiring into the nature of the packets. An officer will hand a suspicious looking letter to a soldier with the remark, "I hope, my man, that you have received good news from your home." And the soldier, with a twinkle in his Calmuck eyes, answers, "Yes, Highborn, very good news from home!" Then the

officer goes off, blowing the ash from the end of his cigarette, and muttering, "*Che sarà, sarà!*" And the reason why he expresses his trite philosophy in Italian is also significant, since he could as well have used his own language: "*Chto budet, budet!*" ("What will be, will be!") But he knows that, for the present, it is safer to give vent to his prognostications in a foreign tongue.

Does Nicholas Alexandrovitch not see and hear how all the greatest men of learning in his kingdom are assembling themselves together and demanding their *Pravda* (Rights); and that there is a power behind them when they make their demands? The gathering in St. Petersburg which met under the chairmanship of M. Korolenko, to which I have already referred, was attended by many distinguished men and women, such as Semorsky the historian, Pestekhanoff the author, Nevsky the poet, Professor Dolbnia, Madame Olga Schapia the novelist, Madame Gallina the poetess, M. Passeder the celebrated jurist, and many hundreds of like fame. These men and women, by their public meeting, defied the Tsar and the knout of the Cossacks. In the days of de Plehve the meeting would have been suppressed, and the distinguished agitators banished to Siberia—but de Plehve is no more—the new era has begun.

In my "Open Letter to the Tsar" I ventured to draw his Majesty's attention to the French Revolution, and to point out to him that there are many

men in his own dominions of the same stamp as the leaders of that movement who are prepared to strike when the right moment arrives. Surely Nicholas II. can hear to-day his Marats putting up their printing presses, and the strokes of the hammers as his Guillotines prepare their instruments of death. His Robespierres are already shouting in the Nevsky-Prospect and in the Kremlin of Moscow; whilst his Dantons are formulating their plans.

Well may Prince Meshtchersky, the proprietor of the *Grashdanin*, exclaim: "Russia has run mad! People are asking each other, 'Is it Citizeness Revolution or Madame Constitution who has arrived in Russia?' We live in a mad-house!" Prince Meshtchersky's fears are well-founded, and his outburst is not without a cause. But he need not fear to leave his question to historians to answer. Though Voltaire, Gibbon, Grote and Carlyle are dead, the world will yet produce historians to record the terrors of the Russian Revolution; and Prince Meshtchersky can rest assured that full justice will be done to him.

Having regard to the signs of the times the Prince speaks truly when he says "we live in a mad-house." For surely all who live beneath the shadow of the *Natsarskoe Selo* are insane. It is not Russia that has run mad, but Tsardom. Nicholas Alexandrovitch, the Dowager Empress, the Grand Dukes, Pobiedonosteff—all are mad; and it seems that there is no cure for their malady. The gods

make mad whom they wish to destroy—and these are mad beyond redemption. Mad with the lust of blood which they have shed. Mad with the frenzy of oppression and persecution and injustice. Mad with a surfeit of self-assurance. Mad—stark mad!

Here is a cry of despair, wrung from one who lives beneath the shadow of the Imperial mad-house. It is taken from a Russian journal, *Our Life*, which dared to give utterance to the agony of a tortured nation: "These terrible Japanese, whom we are expected to frighten by sham unanimity, know full well that our tranquillity is the tranquillity of the prison, and that behind unanimity lurk universal discontent and enmity. Let us look the truth in the face. There is no order among us, and to obtain order we must cease to fear what, in police jargon, are termed disorders. The war may render unexpected services to the reactionaries. Precisely for that reason is it necessary to hasten to safeguard ourselves from the reactionaries. . . . The feeling of pity for the war victims, the feeling of reluctant shame before those whom the awful magnet of the Manchurian tragedy snatches from our ranks, dragging them across the endless stretches of savage Siberia to a foreign land, to a field of death, forces us to cry, 'Quicker! quicker! let an end be made of this horrible butchery!'" Needless to say, *Our Life* was instantly suppressed by the Minister of the Interior.

But whilst Nicholas Alexandrovitch and his

household are raving in the delirium of madness, the Revolutionary party are working steadily on. Here are a few instances of their activity. Not very far from St. Petersburg an ordnance officer of the Tsar sold to a certain man not unknown to the chiefs of the Revolutionary party, who happened to be in need of explosives and who prefers to buy in the cheapest market, 75,000 roubles' worth of the Tsar's powder for 15,000 roubles in cash, which he paid on delivery of the powder at a safe place.

Near Riga, twelve thousand of the Tsar's latest pattern service rifles were bought by a man who has a future use for them, and an eye to business, for 40,000 roubles, half in notes and half in gold. Putting the cost price of a rifle at thirty roubles, this cannot be considered a bad bargain.

In the city of Moscow the same man bought blankets, with the manufacturer's stamp upon them, to the value of 200,000 roubles for 40,000 roubles. These blankets were intended originally for the army in Manchuria; but that was not the direction in which they eventually went. I am unable to say for what purpose the blankets were required.

In the same city, a week afterwards, another man paid 14,000 roubles to a Russian Red Cross official, for articles to the value of 85,000 roubles, including surgical instruments, medicine chests, medicated cotton and sick-room clothing.

But if the Revolutionary party is relieving the army at home and at the front of some of its surplus stock of arms and equipment, it is at least sending the soldiers something in exchange. There is not an officer or soldier of the frontier stations who does not make money, when he can, by assisting to pass over hundreds of cases of literature which are sent from Austria, Germany, Switzerland, and even from England, where a good deal of printing is done for Russian readers, for the benefit of the army and others in the interior. And this goes on in spite of the fact that in every one of the countries named there are spies of the Russian Government on the look-out for undesirable imports to Russia, and also for contraband of war which might be shipped for Japan. London, Manchester, Hull, Liverpool, and several other towns in Lancashire and Yorkshire are infested with Russian spies. In London alone in the month of October there were to my knowledge more than two hundred Russian spies. Some of them are not at all bad fellows, and they are not particular for whom they work so long as they can make a little money, as the following incident proves. The story was told to me by the "gentleman with the gold spectacles," who was also the purchaser of the Tsar's powder in the transaction to which I have already referred.

In a certain town in Yorkshire, in the month of September, a spy of the Russian Government was watching a mill. He was engaged as a mill hand,

and had been employed for several weeks in this fashion, when one day he was addressed by a stranger in his own language :

"*Zdravstvuite, gospodin !*" (Good morning, sir!)

The stranger was a prosperous-looking gentleman in gold spectacles, with diamond rings on his fingers and a magnificent diamond scarf-pin—a regular walking Hatton Garden, with no signs of being affected by the Russo-Japanese war. The spy was taken aback at hearing his mother-tongue spoken by this magnificent stranger; but remembering his part, he looked the speaker over critically and answered in English :

"Are you speaking to me?"

"*Da, gospodin*" (Yes, sir).

Again the spy hesitated, and then answered in English, "Please speak English. I don't understand."

"I only speak English to Englishmen," said the gentleman in the gold spectacles in Russian ; and the spy, seeing that the stranger would speak no other language, gave in, and answered in Russian, "Very well then, I suppose I must speak your own language."

The ice was broken, and after a few minutes conversation these two worthies began to understand each other. Drinks followed, which the stranger paid for ; and then the talk turned on money and the difficulty which the spy found in earning an honest living in England. As he

related his hard experiences the spy looked enviously at the flashing gems and general air of prosperity of his fellow countryman.

"I am glad to see, my brother, that you do not suffer from hard times," he said.

"Well," the stranger answered, "I am not travelling in England for my health. I came here to make money, and I have found no difficulty in doing it."

The spy looked at him in wonder and admiration. "Surely, my brother," he said at last, "since you are a Russian and I am a Russian, you will put me in the way of earning something substantial. I assure you I could do with a slice of English gold."

"I think I could find you something remunerative," said the prosperous gentleman. "If a thousand pounds would be of any use to you."

"A thousand English pounds!" the spy gasped in amazement.

"We will call it ten thousand Russian roubles," said the stranger. "It comes to about the same thing, and it is Russian money that you will earn."

"What am I to do?"

"Meet me in Liverpool to-morrow, and I will tell you."

The spectacled gentleman wrote a name and address in Liverpool on a slip of paper, and handed it to the spy, and they parted.

The following day there was a vacancy at the

mill for one hand. The spy and his fellow countryman sat over a substantial meal in a Liverpool restaurant.

"I knew you for a spy, my brother," said the spectacled gentleman affably, "and that you have been in the service of our Government for eighteen years."

The spy nodded assent—he was past the stage of surprise.

"So you understand that when I spoke to you yesterday I knew to whom I was talking. I can tell you the day you went to the mill, and what you were doing before. I have had my eye upon you for a long time."

"What do you want me for?" the spy asked suspiciously.

"Oh, I don't want you, my brother," the other answered. "I only intended to let you know that I knew you. It was you who suggested that I might be able to help you to make a little money; and it is entirely to suit your own convenience that you came to meet me here to-day. But since you have come, I have found something for you to do to earn that thousand pounds, or, rather, those ten thousand Russian roubles—though you can take it in any currency you like when you have earned it."

"What am I to do?" the spy asked.

"It is a very simple matter," said the stranger. "All you will have to do is to take to Russia

some goods which have arrived here only this morning."

The spy thought for a few minutes before answering. He evidently suspected the nature of the business which his new employer suggested.

"I'll take them," he said at last, "and when I say I'll do it, it will be done, you may depend upon that, my brother. If it is not done it will not be because I have failed, but because I am dead."

The prosperous man beamed at the spy through the gold rims of his spectacles, and nodded approvingly.

"I must go to London to-morrow for further instructions," he said, "and you must meet me there. Then I will tell you where the goods are to be delivered in Russia."

Three days later the two men met again at a quiet place in the neighbourhood of Knightsbridge. The spy, having undertaken the commission, carried out his instructions to the letter, as the sequel shows.

The gold-spectacled man opened the conversation.

"Well, my brother," he said, "if you are still bent on making ten thousand roubles you will have to do as I tell you."

The spy expressed his determination to go through with it, and his employer continued:

"I have fourteen packages, securely fastened

with leather straps and a leather hand-grip attached to each, so that they can be easily carried. The packages resemble rolls of rugs and other articles of travellers' personal luggage. These fourteen parcels must be deposited in three different places in Russia, near the frontier. To two of these places there is railway communication, but you will have to drive nine versts to the third, and you will receive twenty roubles extra for the expenses of the drive. When you tell me that you can do it, I will tell you the names of the places where the parcels are to be left."

"Fourteen packages!" said the spy thoughtfully. "It will be troublesome. I could not do it in one trip."

"I can help you in that," the other answered. "I can send two men with you, or even three if you like, to within a few versts of the frontier; but they cannot cross the frontier with you. I will go myself to Königsberg, and when the packages have all been delivered you can meet me there, and I will pay you in full four days after."

"Could not I put the packages into the luggage van?" the spy asked. "It would save the other men, and I should be in the same train with them."

"Quite impossible!" the spectacled man exclaimed. "You must never take your eyes off them."

Again the spy relapsed into thought. It was evidently a dangerous undertaking—but then—a thousand pounds!

"Very good!" he said at length. "Where are these presents of clothes to be delivered?"

"Three packages are to be deposited in Sosnovisce, five near Kovno, and six in Lomzha. When will you start?"

"To-day, if you like."

"No, that is impossible. I must see the men who are to go with you. Let us say to-morrow evening."

"It is all the same to me."

"You will receive fifty pounds on account," said the prosperous man, taking a bundle of notes out of his pocket. "I will give them to you now."

"No, no!" the spy answered. "I have quite enough to look after with your fourteen packages. You can pay me the whole sum at Königsberg."

"Then it is all settled?"

The spy rose to take his departure.

"Of course, my brother," he said slyly, "I shall not ask you what these packages contain; but I understand that I must take the greatest care of them."

"As to that," said the other, "you cannot be too careful. They contain a legacy which Cecil Rhodes left to his relatives in Russia. The packages are full of diamonds, the same as I wear on my fingers—you see!"

He flashed the rings which he wore in the spy's face and laughed, and the spy laughed too.

"I never heard before that Rhodes had relations in Sosnovisce, Kovno, and Lomzha," he said.

At Königsberg, a week later, the gentleman with the gold spectacles and diamond rings was seated in a room in one of the hotels, when a man entered and handed a letter to him. He tore open the envelope; but before he could read the contents of the letter he found it necessary to refer to a little book which he carried in his pocket. With the help of the book he deciphered the message, which was to the effect that the packages had been safely delivered and removed in good order from Sosnovisce, Kovno, and Lomzha. Within three days he was joined at Königsberg by the spy, who had successfully accomplished his mission. The gentleman with the gold spectacles was perfectly satisfied with himself and with the spy, to whom he handed 10,000 roubles, saying:

"There is your money. Let no man say that there is no honour among thieves."

Now since the spy has discovered a new and remunerative field of employment in acting as a "parcels delivery," he no longer watches the mill in Yorkshire, but makes frequent trips to and from Russia in the service of the gentleman with the gold spectacles. As to the contents of the fourteen packages, I had no opportunity of making an analysis of them; but I do not believe that they

contained Cecil Rhodes' diamonds. The gentleman with the gold spectacles informed me that any one of these fourteen packages would suffice to reduce St. Petersburg to ruins.

Such packages find their way into Russia almost weekly for some purpose or another. And, as in the case which I have related, they are frequently taken into that country by the very men whom Nicholas Alexandrovitch pays to protect him. It is an ugly business; but a bad master makes bad dogs. Those who serve the Tsar as soldiers, police, or spies know full well that he will only keep them so long as they are fit and strong for the work, and when they break down they will be cast off as useless. There is no future before them but the steps of the churches, where they may beg their daily bread. Self-preservation, the first law in nature, urges them to snatch the means of subsistence wherever they can find them. They bear no love nor loyalty to the master who half starves and thrashes them, and they will turn and rend him for the promise of a full belly and a soft bed. The example of those in exalted places teaches them no higher sense of duty. The greatest plunderers wear the highest decorations—then why should not the humble *gorodovoy* levy blackmail from the thief? And why should not the spy supplement his meagre pay by performing services for others?

Nicholas Alexandrovitch knows of these things, but in the delirium of his dream he turns from the

contemplation of realities to the flattering phantasms which the Dowager Empress and M. Pobiedonostseff conjure up before his eyes. Meanwhile the actors are preparing to place the drama on the stage. All is ready, and they are awaiting the signal for the rise of the curtain.

CHAPTER XVI

THE LAST OF THE ROMANOFFS

It is not my intention to draw a lurid forecast of the acts of the drama which is about to be played on the stage of Russia. I can only speak of the things I know—of scraps of dialogue which some of the principal actors have recited to me, of stage properties of which I have caught glimpses in the wings, and of the stupendous issues which hang upon the plot. The stage manager has satisfied himself that all the actors are present, that all the properties are in their places, that the carpenters and engineers are at their posts, and that the great army of "supers" are marshalled behind the scenes, ready to make their entry when the curtain is rung up. All is ready, and the manager stands with his hand upon the bell. There is one man who can even yet avert the dire catastrophe of the raising of the curtain upon the bloodiest drama that the world has ever seen—that man is Nicholas Alexandrovitch, Tsar of Russia. If he would but grant the demands of his people for liberty and a Constitution, the curtain might remain down for ever. But this much of the opening scene I know—that on the day when

Nicholas II. definitely refuses to grant the Constitution which his people have demanded, on that day he signs his own death-warrant; and with him will go the whole house of Romanoff. Whilst the heads of the Revolutionary party are touring the country, as they are now doing, organising the forces of revolution into compact bodies, there is yet time for the Tsar to speak the word, and save himself and his house. But, when once the signal is given, the drama must be played out to the end.

In St. Petersburg and Moscow the pass-words are "Liberty and Constitution." The countersign comes back from Poland and Finland, "Liberty and Constitution." The words are taken up by the great voice of European Russia, and the cry reverberates to the uttermost limits of the Empire, "Liberty and Constitution." Siberia and Vladikavkas echo back, "Liberty and Constitution." It is the united demand of a nation in bondage; and it will accept nothing less. The days of compromise and fair words and good intentions are past. The people with one voice call for action; and if the Tsar will not take action they will take it for themselves.

The Church of Russia sees her influence vanishing before the counter-attractions of the Revolutionary stage. The popes are praying, "Lord, have mercy upon us!" They can see the terrible signs which Bureaucracy, covering its eyes with the gilded sleeve of office, refuses to acknowledge. The popes of the Orthodox Church know that many of the moujiks

who pass the doors of the sacred building no longer uncover their heads and kneel on the steps in prayer, as they used to do, but pass by without so much as crossing themselves. The aged Pobiedonostseff, the High Priest and Procurator of the Holy Synod, prays for deliverance; and though he too must assuredly see the signs which his ignorant priests have observed, yet he cannot soften his heart towards the heretic, nor deny the godhead of the Tsar. Poor old man! the sand in the glass is running low, the fanatic years are drawing to a close. May he be spared by death from the fate which awaits him when the curtain rises!

There is a street lamp-post in a certain city of Russia which is one of the stage properties of the opening act of the drama. It towers above the road majestically, and stretches out its four arms to the cardinal points of the compass; and from each arm depends a glowing incandescent lamp. The pillar is wrought with decorative designs, and rears its head four fathoms above the street of which it is the pride and glory. A certain rich man made a present of it to the city, in loving memory of his wife, to be for all time a monument to her virtues, and a lasting expression of his affection. But the curious part of the story is that the rich man never had a wife!

If the authorities only knew what was in the mind of that public benefactor when he presented the lamp-post to his native city, if they had the

least suspicion of the ultimate purpose for which it was erected, it would not be allowed to stand for a single day. That lamp-post is intended to figure in the pages of history in the same category as the stake, the block and the tumbril, and other gruesome emblems of despatch. There are men who pass by it almost daily, who, it may be, glance approvingly at its elegant proportions and tapering arms; but if they knew the significance which it has for them they would shun it as they would a pestilence. Nevertheless, beneath its shadow the stupid *isvoshchiks* rest their tired ponies in unconcerned good-humour, ignorant of the purpose which the lamp-post is destined to serve.

Though no rehearsals of the drama have been possible, the management have carefully considered every scene. Their plans are complete for the reduction of the Fortress of Schüsselburg and of St. Peter and St. Paul in Petersburg, and of all the great *Kreposts* in Russia. They will be dismantled and destroyed; and the very housebreakers who are to undertake the task have been selected.

In the fleet of Admiral Rosdestvensky half of the men of the crews are revolutionaries who will give a good account of themselves, though it is probable that Nicholas Alexandrovitch will feel no pride in their achievements. General Kuropatkin has some eighty thousand revolutionaries in his army, who will make no Japanese widows and orphans; they have sworn to die rather than take deliberate aim

at the enemy, who is no enemy to them. There is a great catastrophe pending in Manchuria ; but I am not at liberty to speak of it. I shall leave it to historians to record.

I was talking recently to a man who is cast for an important part in the coming drama. I asked him how long the world would have to wait for the opening scene.

"I have nothing to do with that," he answered. "The signal will be given from Russia by Russians who can see and watch closely the movements of events. We all have our parts assigned to us, and beyond them we have nothing to do with it. But we are kept hard at work at our own tasks."

I asked him for how long he had been a revolutionist?

"I have been a revolutionist," he answered excitedly, "since the day when I was taken from the University of Moscow, some fifteen years ago, and sent to Siberia for ten years, *Voilnoie poselenia*, for what offence I do not know, by Alexander III. I was released when Nicholas II. had been on the throne for five years. I went to Königsberg and took a degree in medicine; but there is no practising for me—I have other things to do."

In the course of our conversation he gave me his views on many subjects, from affairs of highest policy to matters of detail. His ideas coincided very nearly with other members of the Revolutionary party with

whom I have spoken. He held that the war with Japan has not materially helped to bring on the climax, pointing out that the war was only a matter of ten months' history; whereas the Revolutionary party had been working and preparing for years—and that it is still going steadily on—war or no war. He declared emphatically that to break the power of the Church was their first aim, recognising that it is the main prop of Tsardom, and that the cult cannot be stamped out of Russia until the Orthodox Church has been destroyed. He pointed out that religious liberty was the first demand of the Zemstvos in the draft of a Constitution, and asserted that the Zemstvos knew very well what they were about in placing it at the head of their reforms. He was convinced that the Tsar would not accept the Constitution, for the reason that if he accepted it there would be nothing left for him to rule. In speaking of the Tsar he referred to him as Alexander III. I reminded him that it was no longer Alexander III. who was Tsar of Russia.

"Not in name," he answered, "but for all practical purposes it is still Alexander III. who rules, through his wife, Marie Dagmar, and M. Pobiedonostseff."

This remark of the revolutionist gives one a good insight into the present *régime* in Russia, and accounts for the instability and uncertainty which are the characteristics of the reign of Nicholas II. The autocracy of the day is a dual personality, a

combination of sottish brutality and weakness. Alexander III. was coarse and ignorant, with a great reserve of brute force. He ruled Russia with the clumsy fist of a moujlk, and swore down all opposition to his will. His son Nicholas is weak and a dreamer, and the only trait which he appears to have inherited from his father is obstinacy. But the ideals and methods of the father, which have found no place in the nature of the son, are still in force in Russia, through the influence which the Dowager Empress and M. Pobiedonostseff exercise over the weak will of Nicholas II. The result is that Russia is in a worse plight under Nicholas than she was under Alexander. Men and Ministers knew what to expect from the father—and he never disappointed them. But from the son they know not, from day to day, what may be in store for them. When we hear of liberal tendencies and reforms we know that Nicholas is talking in his sleep. When reaction and oppression are publicly proclaimed, we hear the voice of Alexander speaking from the grave.

I questioned my revolutionary friend on the subject of the personal safety of the Tsar. He expressed the opinion that there was no cause for alarm on that point "at present." That so far as the revolutionists were concerned, he might with safety visit any of the large towns of Russia. He then mentioned, what I have already stated in these pages, that for the last ten years the Revolutionary

party has protected the life of the Tsar, and that they would continue to do so.

"With what object?" I asked.

"We are opposed to bloodshed," he replied. "But when the heads of the Revolutionary party are definitely assured that Nicholas II. refuses to grant a Constitution to Russia, they will then decide to make an end of the Romanoffs."

As he spoke the vision of the lamp-post rose before my mind's eye.

"And what then?" I asked.

"We shall choose our own form of Constitution."

As I have already stated, the form of Government which will probably recommend itself to the Revolutionary party after the cataclysm is a Republic on the lines of the United States Constitution. The country is geographically well adapted to this system, being already divided into Governments, Counties and Districts, which correspond to the States, Counties and Districts of the United States. In six months the new Russian Republic would be as complete in its political economy as is the great American Republic, and it would have the advantage of copying what is best from every Government in the world.

The question which is frequently raised as to the social maturity of the people of Russia, and their fitness for self-government, is one which need not cause any alarm to ethnologists. I venture to assert that, with all their ignorance and fatalism,

the Russian moujiks are as well fitted for self-government as some of the inhabitants of New York State or Pennsylvania, or as the lynch-law element of the Southern States. I have not as yet heard the suggestion advanced that these gentry need a Tsar to civilise them. All that the people of Russia ask is that the rest of the world should mind their own business, and abstain from interference with the internal affairs of Russia. They have neither asked nor received any benefits from foreigners, and they have no intention of meddling in their affairs. The development of their own country and the amelioration of their own people will keep them fully occupied for many years to come.

I asked him what would become of the aristocracy; and whether he did not fear that the presence in Russia of such a numerous and influential class with feudal ideas might not be a danger to a republic. He shook his head.

"I do not think so," he said. "The majority of the nobility are on our side, if not openly, at least at heart. No injustice will be done to landed proprietors. As to their titles of nobility—they can retain them if they choose, as they have done in France."

And then he told me a story to demonstrate the fact that the aristocracy of Russia are not necessarily the enemies of liberty, and that there are in their ranks men who are prepared to sacrifice their lives in her cause. In St. Petersburg in the month of

November 1904 there was a meeting held of members of the Revolutionary party, to consider the question of the Constitution which the Zemstvos were submitting to the Tsar for acceptance. It was generally admitted that the Tsar would refuse to accede to the demands of the people, and the meeting had to decide what course the Revolutionary party was to pursue when the Tsar rejected the proposals of the Zemstvos. Now one of those present at the meeting was a member of the Executive Committee of the Revolutionary party, and himself a Romanoff. And it was this man who rose to move that, in the event of the rejection of the Constitution by the Tsar, the house of Romanoff should end with Nicholas II., and that not a Romanoff should be left in Russia. He proposed his motion and sat down; and silence fell upon the meeting. Men looked into each other's faces blankly, but none could find words to express the doubt which was in his mind. At last one of them ventured to speak. "You are yourself a Romanoff," he objected.

"Yes," said the mover of the resolution. "I am a Romanoff. But if liberty is not granted to Russia I demand that an end be made to the Romanoffs. You need not fear me, I shall not survive the rest of my house. I shall gather myself with the last of the Romanoffs, and deem it a privilege to give my life for the liberty of Russia."

Again silence reigned in the assembly. It was the silence of intense emotion. Many eyes were

wet with tears, and no man would trust himself to speak. And so they sat speechless for some minutes. Then, at last, one of the members rose and essayed to give voice to the sentiments of the meeting; but his utterance was choked by the rising lump in his throat. He sat down again until he had recovered his self-possession, and, finally mastering himself, addressed the assembly. In a few simple words he referred to the devotion and self-sacrifice of the member of the Executive Committee who had just addressed them. Then, carried away by the strength of his emotion, he swore that he would not survive him, and that whether the last of the Romanoffs perished by his own hands or by the hands of others, he would bear him company in the cause of liberty. Having spoken, he approached the Romanoff and fell upon his neck. Neither spoke, nor did any other member attempt to prolong the meeting by unnecessary words. They dispersed with the knowledge that the meeting had done more to draw those present into the bond of brotherhood and loyalty to each other and to the cause of liberty than all the resolutions in the world could effect. These are the men with whom Nicholas Alexandrovitch has to deal in the near future. And among them are to be found members of his own house.

There will be one figure on the stage when the curtain rises, who will present a strange contrast to the implacable vengeance and the ruthless tyranny of the opposing forces of revolution and autocracy.

An old man, stricken in years, who has been the apostle of peace, charity and liberty in Russia for a life-time. Lyof Nicholaivitch, the beloved of the people, and the fearless exponent of the rights of humanity, will have no part in the arguments of a bloody revolution. He will stand alone in rugged strength, crying in the wilderness that men should love one another, and forbear to commit murder. But his voice, which to-day echoes to the uttermost parts of the earth, will be drowned in the clash of strife and in the cries of the fallen. He has fearlessly given his warning in the past. He has cried to autocracy, "Repent!" He has shown by his words and by his example the more excellent way of reform. But he has not reckoned with human nature; he has left out of his account the strain of murder which is the inheritance of the sons of men. He stands in gaunt solitude upon a pinnacle of righteousness, and cries, "Peace!" but there is no peace.

The revolutionists of Russia love Tolstoy, but they cannot follow him. They do not speak to him of their movements and intentions, for they know that he would counsel them to desist, and they cannot reconcile themselves to his doctrines. How are they to love Nicholas Alexandrovitch, Pobiedonostseff, Muravieff, Obolensky, and all the host of Bureaucracy, who have oppressed and persecuted them? They are only human after all, and they have suffered grievously. They know that Tolstoy

would tell them that it is shameful to render evil for evil; that the wrongs which they have suffered do not justify them in inflicting like wrongs on their persecutors. And therefore they leave the old man alone; knowing that in the opposite camp, which is blessed with the support of the Orthodox Church, they have a high-priest in M. Pobiedonostseff, who has no difficulty in convincing his people that two wrongs will make one right—if necessary.

To sum up the characters which fill the bill of the play we have, on the one side, resolute men who, without fanaticism, confusion or haste, are working strenuously towards a goal. Behind them is arrayed a host of humanity, which for centuries has been kept in ignorance of the rights and privileges of mankind. The moral forces which are on the side of the revolutionists are the justice of their cause and the natural progress of humanity. One thing is certain, and that is, that whether they succeed to-day or whether they meet with a reverse, the end to which they strive must eventually be attained. It is impossible that the laws of progress and evolution can be for ever stayed by the will of one man.

On the other side is Autocracy, backed by a corrupt Bureaucracy and a disaffected army. The one aim of Autocracy is to maintain the power, which it has wielded for centuries, over the people of Russia. For this purpose it relies principally on

superstition which is fostered by the Church, and ignorance which is ensured by educational restrictions and the Censorship. There is no moral force which justifies Autocracy in attempting to check the progress of mankind; and the cause for which it is fighting is doomed by the natural order of things.

The prologue of the drama is supplied by the demand of the Zemstvos for a Constitution, and by the unrest and discontent which are manifesting themselves all over Russia in consequence of the war and of the misery which it entails on millions of the Tsar's subjects. Nicholas Alexandrovitch, maddened by a superstitions delusion that his autocracy contains an element of the divine, clings tenaciously to the reactionary policy of his ancestors, and desires to transmit to his infant son the sacred inheritance of autocracy intact. In this insane desire he is encouraged by his mother, the Dowager Empress, and M. Pobiedonostseff—in fact, the delusions which he holds concerning his divine responsibilities are due to the influence which these two persons exercise over him. When the delirium of his madness gives place to sleep he talks incoherently of reforms, and is at once shaken out of his slumber by the hands of those who encourage his mental disorders.

Meantime the crown of Imperial Russia rests not upon his head, but on a mountain of dynamite; and the Revolutionary party, fuse in hand, stands by ready to detonate it when the signal is given. But

until that moment arrives his enemies protect his life, that their plans may not be forestalled before all is ready. Only recently, in December 1904, they saved him from the fate of King Alexander of Servia. In this atmosphere of frenzy and haunting dread Nicholas Alexandrovitch lives from day to day, not knowing that each meal may not be his last, nor that the cigarette which he holds between his lips may not be placed in the glass case beside the unfinished cigarette which his grandfather laid aside when he left the Palace on March 13, 1881. This is the inheritance which he would leave to his son and his son's sons for generations! This is the divine autocracy which raises the Romanoffs above the sphere of mere mortals! Is there a man in the world who would change places with Nicholas Alexandrovitch? To live in an inferno of terror; without a true friend in the world; nourished with flattery and falsehood; surrounded by spies and prying courtiers; distrustful of the truth, and of the honest men who tell it; satisfied with pomp and circumstance and empty power.

"All things are in fate, yet all things are not decreed by fate," said Plato. Nicholas Alexandrovitch has sealed his own fate by defying the course of nature. He is in the quicksands already to his shoulders, yet he desires that his son may fare no better. He does not know that he is the last of the Romanoffs, and that the quicksands will soon close for ever over the head of Autocracy.

CHAPTER XVII

THE DOWAGER EMPRESS

Women from the beginning of things have fared badly at the hands of historians. The example set by father Adam in shifting the origin of evil on to the shoulders of "the woman" has been extensively followed by his descendants in all ages. For the crime of disobedience the Jewish and Christian Churches have held up poor Eve to the reprobation of mankind for more than five thousand years. And yet she was nothing like so disobedient as the average woman of the twentieth century; and she had the grace to be ashamed of herself, which is more than can be said for most of her disobedient daughters.

Take again the case of Xantippe. Poor soul! her memory is a reproach and a byword to this day; but all that I can find against her is that she plagued the life out of one unfortunate philosopher who happened to be her husband, more than two thousand years ago. That the domestic troubles of Socrates and his wife should be handed down through the ages to the discredit of Xantippe exclusively, speaks volumes for the prejudice of historians.

Another woman who incurred the opprobrium of the civilised world was Delilah. Her conduct in betraying Samson was quite indefensible; but, so far as we know, she only practised her tonsorial art on one man, and for this solitary crime she is condemned for all time. The point to which I wish to draw attention is, that these three women, and I know not how many more, have incurred everlasting infamy by indiscretions committed to the detriment of one person only. Adam, Socrates and Samson were the only three people individually who had any valid grievance against them; but, because they were women, historians have handed down their names to lasting disgrace.

But there is another side to the question. There are women to whom historians have been unduly lenient. To cite one instance only, and that in modern history, take the case of Marie Antoinette. We are overwhelmed with the praises of her beauty, her charm and her grace; but that she materially assisted to provoke a bloody revolution, and was in a great measure responsible for the downfall of her husband's house, is forgotten against her. That she paid the penalty of her folly and indiscretions with her life does not alter the facts, nor does it excuse her. But historians delight in handing her down to posterity as the embodiment of fascination and an object of pity. The world has made a heroine of her, and calls its carpets and sticks of furniture by her name. Had Marie Antoinette

been a plain woman and a daughter of the people, she would probably have fared differently in history. But with the face of an angel, and with Maria Theresa of Austria for her mother, and a Grand Duke of Tuscany for her father, and Louis XVI. in the equivocal position of her lord and master, she has carried the hearts of the historians by storm. Therefore the name of Marie Antoinette stands for admiration and compassion ; and the revolutionists, whom she helped to make famous, are bloodthirsty murderers and terrorists.

But to whom is France the more indebted—to Marie Antoinette, or to Mirabeau, Lafayette, Barnave, Talleyrand, Roland, Brissot, Dumouriez, Marat, Danton, Robespierre ? Even Marat is called a horse-leech, vagabond and an ignorant water-rat, though it must not be forgotten that Marat was physician to the Royal Family, a doctor of medicine of Edinburgh, and the author of many noted books on therapeutics. Yet a certain dyspeptic Scots historian refers to him as a water-rat and horse-leech. Personally, I would not be guilty of punishing my kitchen cat with the name of Marie Antoinette.

It appears therefore that woman is destined never to be justly appraised by the historian. Her complex nature is beyond the understanding of the colourless impartiality of the historical recorder. In consequence the greatest controversies of history rage round the persons of celebrated women. Some are condemned for a solitary indiscretion ; others

are allowed to run riot over the tables of the Ten Commandments without a word of rebuke.

I wonder what history will say of Marie Dagmar, the Dowager Empress of Russia. It is possible that her name will not be recorded in its pages, except as the consort of Alexander III.; for in an autocratic government the autocrat alone is responsible for all the functions of government. But, with all their divine pretensions, autocrats are only human, and subject to the failings and influences of human nature, as are the rest of mankind. That Nicholas Alexandrovitch is free from such failings and influences not even his worst enemy would assert. His failings have received ample recognition, and it is to the influence which guides his weak nature that I wish to draw attention. The dominant influence in his life is that of his mother, the Dowager Empress. In order to give my readers an insight into the relations which exist between mother and son, and into the nature of the influence which she exercises over him, it is necessary for me to draw aside the curtain which veils the interior of that mysterious prison, the Palace of the Tsar.

There was in Russia a certain artist who was a great favourite with Alexander II. and a *persona grata* in all his palaces. When Alexander III. came to the throne the artist was not so frequently at the Court, for Alexander III. had no use for artists. Nevertheless, the Tsaritsa, Marie Dagmar, frequently gave him commissions, and he continued

to do work for the Imperial family. Under the present Tsar the artist came again into great favour, and was perpetually in the palace. It was in the year 1881 that I first became acquainted with him, and we gradually grew to be great friends, though he was more than twenty years my senior. In 1898 we travelled together for nine months, and were on terms of the greatest intimacy.

A few years later I was returning home from Kazan, and broke my journey at St. Petersburg. On my arrival at the hotel I was surprised to learn from the proprietor that my friend the artist was there, and that he was very ill. I asked him how it was that the artist was at the hotel, and what was the cause of his illness. But the proprietor could give me very little information beyond the fact that he had been in St. Petersburg for the last seven weeks, doing some work for the Tsar, and that the previous day he had been brought to the hotel in an unconscious condition, and that two doctors from the palace were attending him.

The circumstances of my friend's arrival at the hotel in a state of unconsciousness struck me as peculiar, and I could not help thinking that there was some mystery behind them. I was determined to find out all about it, and therefore I went to my friend's room without further delay. I opened the door quietly and entered. By the bedside of the artist was sitting Princess N——, a lady whom I had frequently met at his house. She looked up as

I entered, and laying a finger on her lips motioned me to be silent. The artist was propped up with pillows, apparently asleep. Wishing to know the nature of his illness I went on tip-toe to the small table beside the bed, on which there was a medicine bottle. In Russia all medicine bottles have a long strip of paper attached to them, on one side of which is the doctor's prescription, and on the other the directions for the patient. I read the prescription, and gathered from it that my friend was suffering from nervous exhaustion or some ailment of the kind. There was nothing more that I could do, so I went quietly out of the room, and was closing the door behind me when Princess N—— held it back, and followed me out into the passage.

I asked her what it all meant, and why she was by the bedside of the artist, and not his wife. She looked troubled when I questioned her about it, and said that it was not worth while to send for the artist's wife, who was in Paris, as the doctors had told her that he would be well again in a few days. I was, however, far from satisfied with the explanation of Princess N——, whom I knew to be in waiting on the Tsaritsa, and I expressed my intention of telegraphing to Paris to his wife, requesting her to come to Petersburg immediately. When the Princess heard of my intention she became agitated, and implored me to do nothing of the kind. She again assured me that my friend would be quite recovered in a few days, and that a nurse had been

engaged to look after him who would arrive in the course of the afternoon. I had my doubts about the doctor's assurances of my friend's speedy recovery, and I told her so; but I promised that I would wait for a few days before communicating with his wife, to see how he progressed. And so we parted, the Princess to the sick-room, and I to the office of the proprietor of the hotel, to order my baggage to be fetched from the station.

St. Petersburg is by no means a dull place in which to spend a few days, and the time passed pleasantly enough whilst I was waiting to find out what course my friend's illness would take. There were several officers of the Cossacks quartered there whom I had known as junior officers, but who were now wearing the uniforms of *polkovniks*. With them I foregathered, and listened to the yarns which they spun for my especial benefit, believing just as much as I liked of the wonderful stories which they recounted.

On the fifth day after my arrival I called on my artist friend again in the hotel, and was pleased to find him sitting up in bed, whilst the nurse stood beside him with a cup of bouillon to which he was feebly helping himself. He was not at all surprised to see me, as Princess N—— had told him of my arrival. I talked to him for a few minutes in the nurse's presence, and then left him, saying that I would come back again in the evening. But, to my surprise, when I returned a few hours later, I

found a card fastened to the outside of his door forbidding anybody to enter, but to address all inquiries for the patient to the doctor. The card was signed by the doctor; but I took no notice of it, and turning the handle of the door I entered.

The nurse tried to bar my passage, saying that she had orders from the doctor not to admit any one into the patient's room. But I was not to be excluded, and pushing her gently aside I went to my friend's bedside. He seemed to be a little better, and so I asked him why the doctor had fastened the card to his door. He knew nothing about it, as I expected. I told him that I should not take orders from his medical adviser; but that if he personally felt disinclined to see me then, of course, I should not thrust myself upon him. He smiled languidly and answered in Polish, so that the nurse should not understand:

"You can come here whenever you wish, and the more you are with me the better I shall like it. I know what all this means. I will tell you about it some day."

I remained with him for about half an hour, and then left. The next time I went to see him the doctor arrived whilst I was sitting beside his bed. After feeling the patient's pulse he turned to me and said:

"I presume, sir, that you are unable to read Russian?"

"Not at all," I answered. "I can read it very well."

"Then I am surprised that you have disregarded my orders on the notice outside the door."

"I paid no attention to the notice," I explained, "because I am a personal friend of your patient and his family; and unless his wife comes to him I must insist on being allowed to visit him so long as he wishes me to do so."

At this point the artist intervened, requesting that I might be allowed to see him. The doctor objected on the grounds that he must be kept very quiet. And then I told the doctor that I was a medical man myself, and that I should therefore be careful not to harm his patient by over-taxing his strength. Finally, the doctor retired defeated, and I heard him mutter as he left the room, "*Anglisky podletz!*" (English carrion!) I said nothing to my friend about his medical adviser, but I made up my mind, that if I came across him again, I would try to impart to him some advice on his manners towards his colleagues.

A week later the artist was out of bed and convalescent, and I asked him to explain to me, as he had promised, the meaning of things—the cause of his illness, and why it was that the back of his head, from his left ear to his collar-bone, was bruised and swollen. But the nurse came into the room, and once more the subject was dropped. However, the next day he told the nurse that she could go out for three or four hours, to which she raised no objection; and we had the field to ourselves.

"I am sure, my friend, that you are wondering why my wife is not with me," he began, as soon as we were alone; "and why I am in this hotel, and why the doctor tried to keep you out of the way. Well, I can tell you, But before I do, I want you to give me a promise."

"What am I to promise?" I asked.

"That you will not mention my name in connection with what I am going to tell you, so long as I am alive. You can do what you like when I am dead—and my days are numbered, I think."

I affected to laugh at his pessimistic anticipations, though I knew very well that his premonition was well founded. As a matter of fact he died eighteen months after the events which I am describing, worn out in body and mind. His very art seemed to sap his strength. He had passed his youth in extreme poverty, sometimes almost in starvation; and when prosperity came to him he no longer had the bodily health to enjoy it. I gave him the promise which he asked of me, and, though he is now dead, and I am at liberty to mention his name, yet I refrain from doing so for the sake of those whom he has left behind him.

"I came to St. Petersburg by command of the Tsar to execute a commission," he said. "Whilst I was at my work I became ill—and here I am."

He paused, as though he still hesitated to tell me his story, but at length he resumed:

"It is a terrible story, but you have promised not to mention my name in connection with it."

I nodded, and he continued:

"I had been at work for some weeks on the picture—a family group of the Tsar and Tsaritsa and their children. One day I had just arranged the room which was given me for a studio, and had posed the group and began to work, when the Dowager Empress entered. She was in a very gracious mood, and came to look at the picture. Then she handed me two fifty-rouble notes, as a present for my children, saying that they were the first notes which had been struck from my own engravings. I thanked her for her kindness and turned to my work again. The Dowager Empress remained in the studio talking to the Tsaritsa very amicably, until, like an ill wind, Pobiedonostseff's name was mentioned. I think it was the Tsar who first mentioned it. He had it in his mind to relieve the old man of his office, and to appoint a younger man in his stead. There was a storm at once. The Dowager Empress declared that Pobiedonostseff was the only true servant of the family; that he had served the Tsar and his father and grandfather faithfully; that she would not allow him to be turned out so long as she lived; and that if it had not been for him the Empire would have been broken into a thousand fragments.

I went on with my work as though nothing were happening, glancing from time to time at the group

opposite me. The Dowager Empress was at the other side of the studio, and I did not see her; but when she ended her tirade, the Tsaritsa looked up into the Tsar's face anxiously. The Tsar saw the expression in her eyes as clearly as I did, and setting his little girl, whom he held on his knee, on the ground, he stood up and answered his mother—

"Who is the Tsar in Russia—you or I? Am I to rule, or to be ruled?"

That is about all I can remember, except that my easel, canvas, palettes and paint were flying in all directions. Then a heavy paper-weight struck me behind the ear, but I cannot say by whom it was thrown, and I collapsed with the words ringing in my ears:

"Pobiedonostseff! Muravieff! Goremykin! Plehve! Plehve!!——"

Two days later I found myself here. I understand from Princess N—— that the Tsar was also slightly injured, being struck by the heavy easel in its fall; but I presume that it was not serious. So now you can understand why I have a bruise at the back of my head, and also why they were so anxious that my wife should not be summoned, and that nobody should come near me—I might have talked in my delirium, or out of it, and that was to be avoided. I don't think the doctor knows all; but he has his instructions and his suspicions."

When he had told his story he waited for my

comments, but I could find very little to say. Presently he went on :

"I tell you, my friend, there are evil days in store for Russia. What can we expect from the impetuosity of the Dowager Empress? She is making a hell upon earth for all of us, and more especially for the Tsaritsa. I remember the day when Nicholas Alexandrovitch was married. I was present in the palace to make drawings of the ceremony. The Tsar had just come from his private apartments, and the Dowager Empress swept down the room towards him, without even noticing the gentlemen-in-waiting who were lining the walls. She was in a towering passion, and we could all see that an outburst was coming. She went up to her son like a fury, and exclaimed :

"'I wish that you may be brought back from your wedding as your grandfather was brought back from the Winter Palace!'

"You may imagine the effect which his mother's blessing had upon the Tsar! I shall never forget it as long as I live. From that day to this the life of the Tsaritsa has been a perpetual torment, and it is not only her mother-in-law who makes her life unbearable. Our Dowager Empress can be more outrageous than the Dowager Empress of China, about whom we hear so much ; yet, at times, she is an angel. I have seen her in every condition, mood, and humour."

My artist friend was very much distressed by the

state of affairs prevailing in the Tsar's palace, and the outlook ahead of Russia, owing to the reactionary influence of the Dowager Empress. He was anxious that the world should know the true meaning of the retrograde policy which the Tsar was pursuing, and to whose influence it was due, realising that the Dowager Empress is susceptible to foreign public opinion, and that an exposure of the facts might induce her to modify her attitude towards the people of Russia and the luckless Hessian Princess, her daughter-in-law. I pointed out to him that it was very doubtful whether the exposure would have the desired effect, and the difficulty of making the facts known, as unadulterated truth, drawn from the bottom of the well, is a draught which very few men are prepared to give to the world to quaff, and editors are no exception to the rule. However, I have resolved to try the experiment, and to risk the contumely which is attached to it.

When Nicholas Alexandrovitch came to the throne he had a mind for reforms, and to ease the yoke of his people. His marriage to Princess Alix of Hesse provided him with a sympathetic helpmate, who would have assisted him to carry out his good intentions, had there been no more powerful influence to counteract hers. But, unfortunately, there existed a far more powerful influence—that of the Dowager Empress, his mother, who smothered the schemes of the Tsar and Tsaritsa in the cradle. On the

birth of their second daughter the Tsar, with the help of his wife, formulated a manifesto for the benefit of his people; but the Dowager Empress heard of it, and a scene ensued, in which she told the Tsar that rather than the laws of his lamented father should be altered or abridged, she would prefer to see him destroyed with his wife and children. Nicholas Alexandrovitch gave in, and the manifesto was not issued. And so he will continue to give in to the end, when there will be nothing left to give.

As I have mentioned before, many of the Tsar's Ministers owe their appointments to the Dowager Empress. Pobiedonostseff, Muravieff, and the late de Plehve are men after her own heart. The assassination of de Plehve was a great blow to her. She remarked to a gentleman of the household that by Plehve's death she had been left like a ship without a rudder. The appointment of Prince Sviatopolk Mirsky to the office of Minister of the Interior, in the place of her favourite, is by no means agreeable to the Dowager Empress. Prince Mirsky is of Cossack blood, and he is not likely to lend himself to her schemes, nor to the vacillating policy of his royal master. It is therefore improbable that his tenure of office will last long,

The activity of the Dowager Empress extends to every sphere. Not content with making the domestic life of her son and his wife unhappy, and influencing him in his policy, she appoints his

Ministers and Church dignitaries for him, and keeps a jealous eye on his ukazes and manifestoes. All sorts and conditions of men in Russia are at the mercy of her vanity and caprice. It was de Plehve who planned the massacre of Kishineff. But where was the Dowager Empress at the time? She was nowhere to be found by those who desired to petition her on behalf of the Jews. But two days afterwards she was back at the palace. And when, a few days later, she was informed of the storm of indignation which the outrage raised in England and America, she exclaimed:

"What have those foreign Jews to do with it? If they are not content they shall have enough!"

Foreigners in Russian vulgar parlance are all classed as Jews. The Dowager Empress, on this occasion, proved her right to be reckoned among the prophets; for the massacre of the Jews at Gomel took place on the heels of the Kishineff affair.

But it is not only in domestic matters and politics that the Dowager Empress manifests her activity. As a promoter of commerce she is second to none in Russia. If she would leave politics alone, and confine her energies to finance, she would probably be an exceedingly shrewd woman of business. But to manage her domestic affairs, to control the helm of State and Church, and at the same time to attend to oil fields, gold mines, railway companies, land and exploration syndicates, &c., is more than one woman's head can compass, and, as the result, her

financial operations cannot be considered anything but failures.

Here is the story of a venture of which the Dowager Empress and the Grand Duke Peter Nicolaivitch were the promoters. The Grand Duke owned a tract of land which was supposed to contain vast mineral resources. The usual prospectors and engineers were brought to report on the prospects of working it profitably, and they issued the usual glowing report. Two rich men were then discovered to finance the company. They subscribed five million roubles each, the Grand Duke a million, and his partner a like sum. But after a brief life the company went into liquidation, when it was discovered that not one kopek remained of the capital of the company, and that there were no minerals in the land, nor had there ever been! There was no redress for the unfortunate millionaires who had subscribed all the working capital of the company. There is no court to which they could appeal, for the persons against whom they have a grievance are above the law. Of course the story was hushed up in Russia, and not a word about it appeared in the Press; but it is very generally known for all that.

In order to voice her opinions, and to keep the people of Russia posted in such news as is good for them to know, and to point out to investors the highway to wealth, the Dowager Empress has a newspaper under her guidance called the *Novoye*

Vremya. It is edited by that notorious reprobate Alexai Sergevitch Suvorin, as I have elsewhere stated. The *Novoye Vremya* gives no trouble to the censor, because M. Suvorin is above the censor, and only publishes what he is told to publish. Those who wish to stand well with the powers that be in Russia should take in the *Novoye Vremya* and study it diligently. It is the true voice of "public opinion" in Russia, and, as we already know, "public opinion" is the opinion of Nicholas Alexandrovitch, as dictated to him by the Dowager Empress.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE POWER BEHIND TSARDOM

In foregoing chapters I have pointed out the powers which are on the side of autocracy within Russia, in the great struggle which confronts it with the forces of revolution. Briefly summed up, they are the Church, traditional ignorance, and a doubtful army. The revolutionists have no reason to fear any one of the three. For they can pit liberty against the Church, enlightenment against ignorance, and a very respectable body of fighting men, with the justice of their cause at heart, against the disaffected army of the Tsar. But it is not within Russia that the revolutionists are at a disadvantage. What causes them the most trouble is the support which autocracy receives from without. That support comes principally from Germany, France, England, and America, and from various other countries in a lesser degree.

Germany, being the nearest neighbour to Russia, I shall take first, and endeavour to show how she contributes to the maintenance of autocracy in Russia. The greatest friend whom the Tsar has in Germany is his mortal counterpart, William II. I do not pretend to be able to fathom the reasons

which actuate William, by fair means and foul, to give his moral and material support to Nicholas; unless it is that a strain of divinity runs in the blood of both, and the "divine right" of William plays up to the "divine personality" of Nicholas. However that may be, there is no doubt that the Government of Germany, who prides herself on being the leader of the world in thought and enlightenment, and who is perpetually boasting "*unser ehre*" (our honour), aids and abets, in an underhand manner, the cause of autocracy in Russia.

For years the German Government assisted "Plehveism," by handing over to the Cossacks innocent Russian subjects who dared to cross the frontier to seek an asylum from the persecutions of their own corrupt Government. There was no remorse or shame about it—they were simply handed back to the frontier guards with big words about "*unser ehre*," and "*Deutschland über alles.*" Not only did Germany allow Russian spies to come and identify hapless Russian subjects; but she even prostituted her courts of justice to the demands of Russian autocracy, by holding bogus trials before delivering the victims over to the Tsar's Cossacks. For a long time William assisted Nicholas by these means to recover some of his lost sheep, who were subsequently sent to graze in Siberia or to be butchered in the Kreposts of Russia. Nothing was said about it in Germany—the newspapers hardly noticed it, and all might have gone on well if it had

not been for the Königsberg trial. Then it was that the people of Germany discovered what was going on, and the Press began to cry out against the inhumanity, brutality, and injustice of the German Empire acting as *gorodovoy* for the Tsar of Russia. William told the Press to be discreet; but the righteous indignation of a few editors refused to be muzzled, and accounts of the Königsberg trial appeared in their papers.

I do not propose to deal at length with the trial, which is still fresh in the minds of men; but I shall mention a few incidents, and quote the testimony of Professor Reussner, who was formerly a professor at Tomsk University. He said that apostasy from the National Church is punished with banishment to Siberia. . . . The right of meeting does not exist. The sentences of the Courts may be overridden by secret rescripts of the Ministers, or by a ukaze of the Tsar. . . . Judges remain judges only as long as the Government is satisfied with them. . . . No matter whether they are sick or crippled, students leaving Russia for foreign schools without special permission have their property confiscated.

It was these luckless students and others who were flying from the tyranny and oppression which the evidence of Professor Reussner disclosed, whom the German Government were handing over to de Plehve's Cossacks on the frontier.

The state of affairs disclosed by the trial amounted

to this, that Russian spies and police were going about in the Russian quarters of German towns exacting blackmail from their unfortunate fellow countrymen. In the event of a refusal of payment, the spy would go to the nearest German police-station, and make out a case against the recalcitrant person. For this purpose the Russian spy has always a selection of seditious or nihilistic literature, which is supposed to have been discovered on the person or at the house of his victim. The German police then arrested the unfortunate Russian subject, and clapped him into prison, where he was often kept for a considerable time before being handed over to the tender mercies of the Russian authorities.

The evidence of one of the witnesses, a man named Buckholz, caused a sensation in court, when he exposed the methods of Prince Obolensky, the present Governor of Finland. Buckholz swore to the fact that Obolensky, when he was Governor of Kherson, ordered all the peasants in a village, without exception, to be flogged; and when his executioners had finished with the men, he ordered them to begin on the women. As a result many women were violated by the Cossacks. The attempt on the life of Obolensky was due to this outrage. And yet William handed over to the Cossacks men who, having dared to defend their wives and daughters from such outrages, had sought an asylum from the vengeance of the Russian authorities in Germany.

That is one way in which William II. has been assisting Nicholas Alexandrovitch to uphold his autocracy. Here is another. Since the outbreak of the war with Japan, Germany has assisted the Tsar by every means in her power, short of armed intervention, to carry on the war. Her violation of the laws of neutrality has been high-handed and unscrupulous. She unblushingly supplies Russia with contraband of war, and even with ships to coal her fleet on its blundering voyage to the East. With brazen effrontery she sent these colliers to Cardiff to be laden with British coal, under the pretence that it was for home consumption in Germany. It was not until the Japanese Legation pointed out what was going on that our Government ordered the practice to cease. The matter was investigated, and it was proved that these German colliers, after lading coal at Cardiff, took it to the Russian fleet to assist it on its voyage. When this fact was established the supply of Cardiff coal ceased, but it is to be feared that many thousands of tons had already been deposited in the holds of German ships for the use of the Russian Baltic fleet.

But in addition to the material support which Germany has extended to Russia in flagrant breach of neutrality, William has also extended to Nicholas moral succour. When the Russian battleship Petrapavlosk struck a Japanese mine and sank, William rushed round to the nearest telegraph office, and sent off one of the messages for which he

has become famous. He deplored the disaster to Russia in heartfelt words, describing how Russia's sorrow was Germany's grief. But when a similar misfortune overtook a Japanese battleship the submarine cables were not troubled with William's condolences to the Mikado—perhaps it was on account of the expense of sending cablegrams! The German Press resented the telegraphic activity of the Emperor, as the more reputable journals had resented the flagrant breaches of neutrality; but William rebuked the journalists, and exhorted them to discretion, with a sigh of regret that his own country is so small that he has no room for a Siberia, to which to banish unruly editors, like brother Nicholas.

Thus William and Nicholas walk side by side through the pleasaunces of Empire and Autocracy. Kind William supports his feeble friend with a hand stretched out across the fence which divides them. And a certain Russian sage, peering over the barrier, sums up kind William in a sentence—"a narrow-minded, ill-educated, vain man, with the ideals of a German *Junker*."

There is yet another way in which Germany assists the Tsar to maintain his autocratic rule, and that is by subscribing the Russian Government loans which, since the outbreak of the war, have been issued at frequent intervals. A hundred and fifty millions of marks were snapped up by Germany a short time ago, in spite of the fact that a trifle of

two hundred million marks has been owing to her from Russia for some years. So, as it stands at present, Germany is up to the neck in Russian securities, which do not appear to be so very secure. But William is quite right to assist Russia with a little money, for he is looking forward to the day when Nicholas will divide up the Far East with him. He has once already put a spoke in the wheel of Japan, and made her fight a second time for the possession of Port Arthur. Nicholas owes him something for that, and when the pecuniary obligations are added to the score, it becomes obvious that William will have a very powerful lever in his hands when the final settlement after the war takes place. But the distressing feature of the situation is, that it looks as though Nicholas will have very little of the Far East left to divide with William when the settlement comes.

Whilst William is making his little calculations in Berlin, Nicholas is staring distractedly at his empty treasure houses in St. Petersburg, and wondering where he is to turn next for a loan. So far from repaying the capital of the money which he already owes to foreign countries, he is forced to raise new loans to meet the interest on his old debts, with no prospect of ever redeeming the capital. But still he continues to borrow at pawnbroker's rates of interest. For how long his government can continue to raise money in this way it is beyond my powers of calculation to reckon. But there is another source

from which Nicholas is beginning to draw supplies. As the head of the Orthodox Church, in consultation with M. Pobiedonostseff, he has decided that the Holy Mother can spare some of the treasures which the Gods on Earth have consecrated to her use. So the churches and monasteries are paying toll to the treasury. When the money is exhausted there will still remain a fabulous wealth of jewellery, gold and precious stones in the ikons of St. Isaac's Cathedral, and of the Terema, together with the riches of the Cathedral of the Assumption and of the Cathedral of the Annunciation, and of a thousand cathedrals and churches throughout Russia. Therefore the treasures of the Church will eventually be devoted to the good cause of waging war against the heathen Japanese, and to the payment of the Cossacks for their humane work in keeping order among the Tsar's subjects at home.

But how are these precious things to be disposed of, and to what country will they go? The *Mont-de-Piété* in France only advances a tenth of the value on articles deposited. Even the German *Stadts Pfandverleiher* will lend no more than a fifth. We shall, therefore, in all probability see them adorning the windows of Mr. Attenborough's establishments, for the admiration and amazement of the good people of London.

France is running with Germany a close and dangerous race for the favours and friendship of Russia—and both of them know it. Nicholas

Alexandrovitch has as much love for one as for the other; but so long as he can make use of both he will keep on good terms with them. A time will come, sooner or later, when Germany and France will feel the heavy boot of Russia behind them—but that will not be in Nicholas' day. For although France and Russia are in the bonds of an alliance, the *entente cordiale* does not extend to the people of Russia, and it is scarcely credible that the people of Republican France can appreciate the incongruity of allying themselves with autocracy. In my own experience I generally observed that the French were spoken of with contempt by the Russians; and this feeling extended to official and well-to-do circles. The *entente cordiale* which rests upon such slender foundations as the convenience of an autocrat and the vanity of a *bourgeois* Ministry is not likely to be lasting. Meantime Nicholas Alexandrovitch makes hay while the sun shines.

Was there ever a more ill-assorted alliance than this between France and Russia? It reminds me of a Turkish bath where, stripped of our clothing, we all receive the same service and go through the same performance. But when we have donned our clothes again, each goes his own way—the duke to his mansion, the sausage-maker to his shop. But there the analogy ends. For duke and sausage-maker go their ways without asking favours of each other; but not so Nicholas Alexandrovitch. When

he emerges with M. Loubet from the grateful warmth of the *entente cordiale* he informs his republican companion that he is at liberty to pay for the privilege of associating with autocracy, and that the accommodation can take the form of a loan which will never be repaid. France is paying dearly for the condescension of Nicholas Alexandrovitch in deigning to take Madame Loubet in to dinner, and in allowing the Tsaritsa to be "armed in" by good M. Loubet. She holds millions of francs of worthless Russian securities, yet she must continue to dip into her republican stocking again and again to help Imperial Russia—first, because she is sentimental and loyal to the *entente cordiale;* and secondly, because she must save her face before the world, and therefore she flings good money to retrieve that which is almost lost.

The Russian people themselves have more regard for the Germans than the French, for they can see that the most prosperous farms in Russia are in the hands of German farmers; that the most paying manufactories and distilleries are under German management; that many of the professors in the Universities of Russia are Germans. It was Alexander II. who imported Germans into Russia to reform his army and educational methods; and in certain Provinces the Germans have settled and taken root. A reaction against the German invasion set in later, and many of them were sent back to their Fatherland, more especially the professors at

the Universities. Enough, however, remained in Russia to convince the Russians themselves that the German methods are superior to their own; and though they call them "*Nemetzkie kolbassi*" (German sausages) they understand each other well enough. But the French they will never understand.

As it stands, France and Germany both apparently desire the goodwill of Russia. France has the advantage over Germany of an alliance, which may at any minute drag her into war. Kaiser William, to counteract the alliance, sheds copious crocodile's tears over Russia's reverses at the hands of the ungodly Japanese. The harder the knocks which Russia receives the more William weeps and telegraphs his condolences to Nicholas. And since it is in the hours of adversity that we can best estimate the value of friendship, William has plenty of opportunities of showing the genuine nature of his affection for Russia by lending her money, and by infringing the laws of neutrality on her behalf. These are good practical ways of showing sympathy with a distressed neighbour, and France, who has a conscience which will not permit her to vie with her rival in supplying Russia with the contraband of war, has to rest content with her alliance, and with lending what little money she has to spare to her autocratic lover—like a poor little servant girl who is fleeced of her wages by a swell confidence trickster. If William could induce the Reichstag to assist his

brother Nicholas with a war loan of a few millions of marks, how happy he would be! But William is not an autocrat, and the national purse-strings are held in other and wiser hands.

Not satisfied with the loans which he can extract from France and Germany, Nicholas Alexandrovitch scours the whole world for money to bolster up his autocracy. In America he negotiated a loan for twenty-five millions. England, Austria, Italy, and even Switzerland and Spain have been tapped. And every coin which they subscribe goes to maintain in power the most barbarous and corrupt form of government that the world has ever known.

That the Jews should give their support to Nicholas Alexandrovitch is to me inexcusable. Yet I see that Messrs. Mendelssohn and Co., of Berlin, S. Bleichroeder, the Director of the *Disconto Gesellschaft* and the *Berliner Handels Gesellschaft*, Messrs. Lippmann and Rosenthal and Co. and others have undertaken to float a Russian war loan for the sum of 500,000,000 marks. I wonder what that great philanthropist and philosopher Moses Mendel would have said had he known that his descendants would subscribe money to uphold the power of the Tsars of Russia, who have murdered and oppressed their race for generations, and whose representative to-day is seeking by every means to extirpate the remnant of Israel from Russia? Are Kishineff and Gomel already forgotten? Or are the present representatives of the houses of Mendelssohn, Lippmann, and

Rosenthal so youthful that they cannot remember the spring of the year 1881? Do the names of Kieff, Kharkoff, Yaroslav, and Smealah convey nothing to them? If they do not, I can inform them that Jewish blood was spilt like water at these places with the connivance of the Tsar's officials. The twenty-five million pounds which they are underwriting for the assistance of the Tsar of Russia will enable him to send more Jews to the war, and to keep more Cossacks at home to "preserve order" in the cities of the Pale. Of all the nations of the world the Jews should be the last to support the autocracy in Russia. They will buy no concessions for their persecuted brethren in the Tsar's dominions with their money. They will only help to pay for scorpions to replace the whips which now chastise them. If the conscience of these Jewish gentlemen does not reproach them for seeking to make filthy lucre at the expense of their unfortunate Russian kinsmen, it must surely be because they have no conscience.

The great officials of the Tsar are travelling all over Europe in the quest of gold for the Tsar's treasury. From Petersburg to Berlin, and from Berlin to Paris they hasten, crying, "Give! Give!" The friendship of the Tsar of Russia must be paid for in gold; otherwise the Tsar has no use for friendship. Now that France and Germany have been bled to the last rouble, the Tsar is making friendly overtures to Great Britain. There is talk

of an "Anglo-Franco-Russian entente"—when the Dogger Bank affair has "blown over." May Heaven grant that our weak-kneed statesmen are not drawn into this culminating disgrace!

The great power behind Tsardom is the financial support which Nicholas Alexandrovitch receives from the countries of Europe. If Germany, France, and England would refuse to grant any further loans to Russia, an end would quickly come to Tsardom, and to the war in Manchuria, and to many other undesirable things. It is these three countries, therefore, who are mainly responsible for the curse of autocracy in Russia; and it is against their wealth that the revolutionary party in Russia has to contend.

We all know the story of the Yankee who was in grips with a bear, and prayed Heaven to help him overcome it. But the bear still prevailed, and the Yankee prayed again, "O Lord, if you won't help me, don't help the b'ar. Stand by and see fair-play." That is the attitude of the revolutionary party towards the countries of Europe. They are a match for the Church and Tsardom in Russia; but it is the financial and moral support which autocracy receives from the outside world that makes the Russian man of liberty support his head on his wasted hands and weep, thinking of the rivers of tears and blood which are being shed in his unhappy country.

CHAPTER XIX

SOME BRITISH OPINIONS OF THE TSAR

THE greatest calamity that can befall a weak man is to be surrounded by sycophants who constantly pander to his vanity and encourage him to think well of himself. To the strong man flattery is, as a rule, harmless; he discharges it from his mind as it were a night's dream which is forgotten with awakening; it may even be beneficial to him by assisting him to select his friends from the ranks of his enemies. And though a strong man be vain, as many are, yet his vanity is often a virtue rather than a vice, for it may prompt him to good works. There is a vanity of well-doing as well as a vanity of ostentation, and the strong man with brains knows the difference. Flattery is powerless to influence the vanity of well-doing—it may break its head against the stone wall, but it cannot penetrate. How far could flattery go with such men as Marcus Aurelius, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Abraham Lincoln, Herbert Spencer, Leon Tolstoy, or Theodore Roosevelt?

But it is a very different matter when a weakling who holds a position above his fellow men has his

ostentatious vanity tickled by the flattery of those who surround him, whether his position is due to his own merits or to the accident of birth. We have all known authors, musicians, poets, and men of science who might have been great, but who, entertaining an exaggerated idea of the importance of their early successes and carried away by fulsome praise, have become hopeless mediocrities, everything that was good in them being swallowed up by an overweening self-conceit. The same can be said of men who have been divinely gifted with the right to rule over their fellow men, and who happen to be so unfortunate as to be endowed with a weak disposition. Vanity destroys them, and with them, alas! innocent lives over whom the weakling happens to rule. The isolation of their exalted position renders them particularly liable to flattery. They are placed on the pinnacle to which the eyes and ears of the world are directed. When they speak even words of fatuous inanity there is a chorus of admiration from the gaping world. The royal saying is trimmed and pointed, and peddled to the crowd as a *bon mot*.

As a case in point there is the German Emperor. When he speaks, which is, unfortunately, far too often, his words resound all over Europe. His speeches are printed in every language, and are collected into book form and translated. Demosthenes is requested to take a back seat, for Kaiser Wilhelm has spoken! And what is there in his

speeches to command the attention of the world? A great deal of rhetorical pomposity, "the ideals of a German *Junker*," and a total absence of tact. Nevertheless, the world tells William that he is a very fine orator—and he believes it.

Then he poses as an artist and art critic, and the shades of Zeuxis, Michael Angelo, and Turner are breaking up their palettes and applying for jobs on the County Council. But it is whispered that William only suggests the subjects of the pictures which are attributed to him. Nevertheless, the world would have him believe that he is a great artist—and it is not difficult to persuade him.

As a composer and critic of music William has world-wide fame. Of the elevating tendency which his royal patronage has on German music we can judge by the bands which come from his country to our London streets. Wagner did well to die before his fame was eclipsed by his Emperor's musical genius.

On university education William is a great authority, and he delights in the "Hochs!" of the students which greet him when he condescends to address them. Yet William failed to pass the entrance examination to Heidelberg University, and he cannot even write a letter in correct German without assistance and revision.

But his decisions on matters artistic, musical, and educational are paraded for the admiration of the world because they come from the pinnacle of the

German throne. Does any one seriously believe if William, shorn of his kingly prerogatives, were to offer himself as a critic of art, music or education to the editor of a halfpenny comic paper, that his services would be accepted? But so long as there are men in his own country and abroad to tell him what a great authority he is on all things from policy to penholders, William will continue to believe them, and to shake the world with his bombastic utterances. Whilst those of his own subjects who venture to hint that he is not all that he claims to be incur the charge of *lèse-majesté*. But if they may not vent their opinions on the abilities of their Emperor, the German people at least are capable of estimating the value which is to be attached to his words. They listen, and, for the rest, leave him to his own folly.

But it is not so with Nicholas Alexandrovitch. The people of Russia in their attitude towards their monarch differ widely from the people of Germany. They have to suffer for his follies and weaknesses, while the Germans only experience a mild irritation. Like William, Nicholas is addicted to the crudest forms of flattery, and his vanity is of the most ostentatious kind. His pigmy brain is crowded with notions of his self-importance and righteousness to such an extent that he is fully persuaded of his divine personality—and nothing can convince him otherwise.

Whilst he is automatically filled with pomp and

vanity in his own country, he is not without his foreign contingent of flatterers and admirers. There is a crook in the brains of a certain class of people which prevents them from viewing men and things in their true perspective. To them a celebrity must of necessity be possessed of certain virtues; a notoriety, of all the vices. A celebrity is a being to be approached with reverent awe, and a prejudiced mind; a notoriety is to be shunned without a hearing. A celebrity is something more than a man; a notoriety, something worse than a beast. To secure a few minutes' conversation with a celebrity is a privilege which entitles them to speak of him as "My friend the High Muck-a-Muck;" to be in the same parish with a notoriety gives them the right to swear to his infamy. As a general rule a celebrity is a foreigner; a notoriety, a fellow countryman. It is a curious development of cerebral atrophy, and it is very prevalent at the present day. One of the symptoms of this disease is the desire of the afflicted person to advertise himself to the world as a sufferer. He will clamber up on to a public platform, or rush into print in the columns of the newspapers, in order to announce to the world that he is a crank and faddist, and incapable of an unprejudiced judgment.

Foremost in the ranks of those who suffer from this distressing malady in our own country is Mr. W. T. Stead. The disease in his case has reached such an acute stage that he finds it necessary

to edit a periodical of his own, in order that he may convince the world of his infirmity. Mr. Stead's pet celebrity is Nicholas Alexandrovitch. He has spoken to him on three occasions, and he has had the inestimable privilege of corresponding with him. Therefore Mr. Stead is fully qualified to speak with authority on the character of Nicholas as a man and as a monarch; and for the same reasons he is entitled to give the lie direct to a gentleman who wrote an article in the *Quarterly Review* on the Tsar, who, as I happen to know, is intimately acquainted with Nicholas Alexandrovitch. Not content with abuse of the author of the article in question, Mr. Stead condemns with him the publisher of the *Quarterly Review* for daring to publish disparaging criticism of his pet celebrity. Here are some of his remarks:

"The article entitled 'The Tsar,' which appears in the *Quarterly Review* for July, is about as faithful a delineation of the character of Nicholas II. as the lampoon which disgraced *Reynolds's* newspaper on the death of the late Queen was an accurate picture of Queen Victoria. It is amazing that such a malignant libel should find a place in the pages of the most respected organ of English letters, and of English Conservatism.

"The publication of such a lampoon at a time when the Russian nation is smarting under the sting of unexpected reverses which they attribute to what they regard as the absurd devotion of their Emperor

to the cause of peace, is to say the least unfortunate. Even if every word was true, the moment is surely ill-chosen for the appearance of such an article in such a quarter. But it is not true. . . . His aims (the Tsar's) were admittedly admirable, but he did not seem to have the iron in his blood necessary to keep his Ministers in check. That he is, to all intents and purposes, a modern man deeply imbued with the most advanced humanitarian and philanthropic ideas of his time, all who have had the privilege of coming into personal contact with him have testified. . . . The Tsar, as I knew him, was a man whose chief fault was an indisposition born of the temperament of an Imperial Hamlet to put forth his authority and assert his right to control the affairs of the Empire over which he reigned.

"The man who told me that the burden of the Imperial crown was so heavy that he would not inflict it upon his worst enemy, the author of the Peace Conference, and the philosophic opponent of the domination of Asiatics by Europeans, is not recognisable behind the diabolic mask which is offered us by the *Quarterly* reviewer as the true Nicholas II."

Thus writes Mr. Stead of his pet celebrity Nicholas Alexandrovitch, and of the author and publisher of the article which appeared in the *Quarterly Review*. It is hardly worth while to traverse line by line the surmises which he advances in favour of his acquaintance, for we know that Mr. Stead suffers

from cerebral atrophy, which distorts his vision and compels him to advertise his infirmity. But in the concluding sentence which I have quoted Mr. Stead makes direct statements of the Tsar's conceptions, and here I join issue with him. In the first place, Nicholas Alexandrovitch told Mr. Stead that the burden of the Imperial crown was so heavy that he would not inflict it upon his worst enemy. And yet Nicholas Alexandrovitch clings to his autocracy with the tenacity of a leech. He could lighten the burden of the crown, and confer an inestimable boon on Russia by granting a Constitution to his people, and by so doing he would unquestionably be acting rightly and in accordance with his duty to himself and to his fellow men. Mr. Stead poses as a friend of liberty, and he will scarcely gainsay the truth of my assertion. Therefore we are driven to the conclusion that when Nicholas Alexandrovitch told Mr. Stead of the heavy burden of his responsibilities he was engaged in the pastime vulgarly known as "pulling his leg."

Mr. Stead then trots out the Peace Conference as evidence of the Tsar's magnanimity. Had Mr. Stead's sense of humour been commensurate with his admiration of Nicholas II. he would hardly have brought forward this particular project at a time when the champion of peace is engaged in waging one of the bloodiest wars of modern history.

Finally, Mr. Stead speaks of Nicholas II. as "the philosophic opponent of the domination of Asiatics

by Europeans." But that the opposition on the part of Nicholas Alexandrovitch is purely philosophic is abundantly proved by his ill-starred attempt to annex Manchuria. In fact, had Mr. Stead ransacked every ukaze and act of administration and public utterance of the present Tsar of Russia, he could not have found three more unfortunate examples to bring forward in support of his "advanced humanitarian and philanthropic ideas" than those which I have quoted from Mr. Stead's *Review of Reviews.*

But since Mr. Stead is the champion in this country of Nicholas Alexandrovitch and his personal friend; and since he knows him to be intelligent, well-informed, humane, philanthropic, modest, well-meaning, and I know not what else—therefore I challenge Mr. Stead, by the love which he bears to Nicholas Alexandrovitch, to name one single public act which he has done during the ten years of his reign as Tsar of Russia which has been of real benefit to his people. Mr. Stead owes it to his friend and to the world to tell what he knows of Nicholas's good actions. I do not ask much—only one good action in ten years. If Mr. Stead is unable to name one on his own responsibility, then let him go to the Russian Embassy and make inquiries there. And if Count Benckendorff cannot enlighten him, then let him apply to the Tsar himself, and ask him to tell him one good action for the benefit of his people which he has done since he

ascended the throne of the Romanoffs. And if Mr. Stead is still unable to satisfy the desire of the public to know something in favour of the Tsar of Russia, then let me recommend him to give up writing fulsome panegyrics of his favourite celebrity, and stick to dramatic criticism, of which, I understand, he has lately become a leading light.

CHAPTER XX

SOME BRITISH OPINIONS OF THE TSAR (*continued*)

ANOTHER editor of a monthly periodical who entertains mistaken ideas about the Tsar and the Government of Russia is Mr. Henry Norman. Mr. Norman, so far as I know, is not a dramatic critic like Mr. Stead, but he is a member of the House of Commons, and poses as an authority on Russian affairs on the strength of a rapid journey which he accomplished through the dominions of the Tsar. In the course of his travels he too had the felicity to meet and talk with Nicholas Alexandrovitch, and this conversation with the embodiment of autocracy has coloured all his views on Russian affairs. But the views of Mr. Norman were not confined to mental impressions, for he is an amateur photographer of considerable merit, and he made pictures of everything which he came across in Russia, from the Tsar's treasure downwards. He then collected his mental and photographic views into the pages of a weighty volume under the title of "All the Russias." Mr. Norman might have saved himself the trouble of going to Russia if the production of this work were the object of his visit; for he could

have taken his mental views from the pages of the official Russian press, with the help of a translator, and the photographic views he could have procured in the Strand.

I should have refrained from mentioning either Mr. Norman's name or his book, had it not been for the fact that Mr. Norman himself has attempted to discredit other writers who are better qualified to give an opinion on Russian affairs than he is; and furthermore that he has mentioned my name in the September number of his magazine in a manner which gives the impression that I am a Russian anarchist. As regards Mr. Norman's opinion of those who have written books on Russia from personal experience of the country and Government and without Russian official assistance, he is reported to have said: "Very many of the attacks on the Tsar and of the lurid pictures of the internal condition of Russia which find circulation in this country and elsewhere are the work of political exiles and other disaffected Russians, whose sole object is to discredit the Government with whom they are at enmity."

I have already answered Mr. Norman on this point in the columns of a London morning paper, and therefore I shall not labour it further. Though I happen to be of Huguenot descent, I am proud to call myself an Englishman; yet I have made an attack on the Russian Government, and I am now making another, without any personal enmity against

the Tsar or his Bureaucracy. It may be that I am doing very little good, but I am happy in my conscience to think that at least my intention is good. I have been a tramp in Russia for many years, and I have seen and appreciated the miserable existence of the people of Russia, and the tyranny to which they are subjected by their Government. To know what I know of the internal condition of Russia and to keep silence is an impossibility. I may be told that it is no business of mine—then I make it my business. As a citizen of the world I claim the right to point out tyranny wheresoever I come across it, and to cry out against it. What good my crying out may do I cannot say; but at least I have the satisfaction of knowing that I am doing what I can, and that the charges which I bring against the Government of Russia are the truth and nothing but the truth.

But to return to Mr. Henry Norman. Having, I trust, convinced him that one, at least, of the writers who have made "attacks on the Tsar," and "drawn lurid pictures of the internal condition of Russia," is not a "disaffected Russian," and that, in speaking of the misery of the Russian people and of the appalling corruption of the land, he was dealing with subjects of which Mr. Norman himself saw nothing in his hasty journey through Russia, I will now turn to the second count which I have mentioned, namely, Mr. Norman's reference to me as an anarchist. In the September number of

The World's Work and Play, a magazine edited by Mr. Norman, referring to the assassination of M. de Plehve in the editorial article, Mr. Norman rebukes the American nation and the British Press for giving expression to sentiments of relief that the reign of terror which de Plehve had revived in Russia had been brought to a close by his death. The vials of his wrath are more particularly poured out upon me because I gave an interview on the subject to the London *Daily Express*. But, as there are several points in the article in question to which I should like to call attention I shall take the liberty of quoting a few passages and commenting on them.

"The assassination of M. de Plehve, the Minister of the Interior," writes Mr. Norman, "is one of those appalling crimes which disfigure civilisation from time to time."

The first point which the reader should notice is the inapplicability of the word "civilisation" to the case. It is preposterous to call the present form of government in Russia "civilisation," and therefore it was not a crime against "civilisation." I assert that the present form of government in Russia is anarchy. It has neither justice nor "social compact"; the crime committed by Sozonoff was a crime against an enemy to mankind, and it must be judged accordingly. Mr. Norman did not see fit to mention in his article that de Plehve destroyed innocent lives ruthlessly for many years before and after he became Minister of the Interior. He did

not mention that de Plehve had ordered men and women to be knouted to death. He did not mention that de Plehve organised the massacre of Kishineff, a fact of which I have absolute proof. Mr. Norman goes on to say:

"M. de Plehve, according to two careful students who had occasion to discuss the matter with him—Mr. Arnold White and Mr. Lucien Wolf—was, at the time of his murder, preparing to relax some of the regulations which press so hardly upon the Jews of Russia."

This ingenuous statement causes me to smile, though I can perfectly well understand that both the gentlemen named were favourably impressed by de Plehve at their interview with him, and were justifiably deceived in the matter, for reasons which I will presently explain. But it is such an old, old story. There has not been a Minister, Governor, or Tsar assassinated in Russia of whom it has not been said that he was on the eve of reforms. Mr. Norman himself points to the case of Alexander II., who, had his life been spared a few days longer, would have granted a Constitution to Russia. It was the same with M. Bogolepoff, the late Minister of Education, also with M. Siphyagin and General Bobrikoff; all these Ministers had formulated improvements in their departments which they would certainly have carried out had they been permitted to live a few minutes longer! And now it is the same with de Plehve. But if de Plehve entertained

any notion of granting relief to the down-trodden people, he had plenty of opportunities of giving effect to his good resolutions. He was warned more than once of the fate which awaited him if he did not mend his ways; yet his reforms are unheard of until after his death.

I can speak with confidence about de Plehve because I knew him for many years. I knew him long before the "de" was attached to his name—before his name was Plehve even, but Plehdee. I knew him when he was nothing more than a plain notary in Warsaw. Afterwards he became a lawyer, and then a prosecuting attorney—and after that came "de Plehve." I knew de Plehve when he was by no means incorruptible, when he would take bribes freely, and grew fat upon them. Then, as his power increased, he changed his system from taking bribes to using brute force. There was a time, before I knew him, when he used to run about barefooted, singing Lettish songs, a little homeless waif. He was befriended and adopted by a family who were half Lithuanian and half Polish. They clothed him, cared for him and sent him to school. In return, when he became the all-powerful M. de Plehve, he requited his benefactors by sending them to Nijni Udinsk to wash gold.

There was a young lawyer, Paskevitch by name, who knew de Plehve's history, and cried out against the iniquity of de Plehve's action in banishing his benefactors to Siberia. He was the only man

living of whom de Plehve was afraid. One night Paskevitch was roused from his sleep by two *gorodovoys*, who informed him that they had found revolutionary literature in his house and that he must dress himself at once and go with them. Fortunately for Paskevitch, he happened at the time to have a few thousand roubles by him. He gave a hundred roubles to each of the *gorodovoys*, and they allowed him to escape on the promise that he would quit Russia at once. A few days afterwards Paskevitch arrived in London, and there he continued to live whilst his roubles lasted. When they were all spent he found employment as foreign correspondent in a large commercial house, where he worked for more than a year. Then he began to correspond again with his friends in Russia, and de Plehve was informed of his whereabouts. He induced some of Paskevitch's friends to persuade him to return to Russia by assurance of de Plehve's goodwill towards him, and by promises of remunerative employment. Paskevitch took the bait which was offered him and returned to Russia. He was arrested as soon as he crossed the frontier and charged with being a revolutionary. Without trial or investigation, and without a friend in the world to help him, he was deported to Siberia.

Six years later I went in person to Siberia to look for Paskevitch. When I arrived at the Island of Saghalin I was informed that Paskevitch had died two years before. Having satisfied myself of

the truth of the story, I returned to St. Petersburg, where I laid the whole case before an influential Prince, asking him to take it up and bring the crime home to de Plehve. He placed the matter in the hands of the Minister of Justice. In three days' time I received an intimation from de Plehve that if I were bent on meddling with the affairs of criminal prisoners, it would be his duty to see that I was safely escorted across the frontier. The same day I handed the documents which I had collected with reference to Paskevitch's case to the Prince, who laid them before the Tsar, Nicholas II. And there the whole matter ended. But a few days afterwards I was cautioned by my ambassador not to make trouble with certain officials, and to leave the adjustment of the wrongs done to the Russian people to the Russian law and officials. Which was no doubt very sound advice from an ambassadorial point of view! De Plehve was decorated by Nicholas Alexandrovitch shortly afterwards, but I am unable to say whether this fresh distinction was conferred upon him in consequence of his action in the Paskevitch case.

It is not at all surprising to me that Mr. Arnold White and Mr. Lucien Wolf should have been favourably impressed by de Plehve, for he was one of those men who are endowed with the subtlety of the serpent. To know de Plehve was to know two men. He was a being with a dual personality, but with absolute control over both his natures. He

could be Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde at will. He could shed tears like a woman and enlist the sympathy of those who surrounded him until they were ready to swear that he was a much abused man. He was impressive and gentle in his manner of expounding his philosophy, which left upon the mind of his interviewer a conviction of sincerity. At other times he could be passionately cruel and vindictive. His wrath was a flame consuming ruthlessly all who incurred his displeasure. He knew neither pity nor remorse, and he faced fearlessly the consequences of his own brutality. In these Jekyll and Hyde moods I have seen the man de Plehve frequently, both before and after he attained to his position of power.

That there are people in Russia who, in spite of the ghastly record of his public career, believe in the humane and gentle nature of de Plehve is evident from a letter which appeared in the Press from a relative of the murdered man. He attempts to justify de Plehve's conduct as Minister of the Interior, and seeks to clear him from the charge of instigating the Kishineff massacre. "This calumny," he writes, "made still more unbearable the sickness of heart which he experienced on hearing of the calamity which had taken place. . . . There are people who cherish his memory as that of a blameless father and family man, who have wept over his shattered remains lying in their coffin, who have fainted with grief and misery by his grave."

We must all, of course, sympathise with the family of the late Minister of the Interior. But to pretend that his death was regretted in Russia by a single man or woman outside the immediate circle of his family and of his employers would be hypocrisy. If tears were shed over his grave they were tears of joy that an end had come at last to the reign of terror which was associated with his name.

To return once more to Mr. Norman's article, I come now to the paragraph in which he takes exception to the American nation, the British press, and, incidentally, to me.

"We can only hope that the Tsar and his Ministers will have the supreme moral courage to ignore the crime so far as concerns any measure of domestic progress they may have had in contemplation. Certainly it requires great moral courage to do this in the face of the glorification with which the crime has been received in many quarters abroad. For example, the New York correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* cabled on August 1 that five thousand Jews 'held one of the most remarkable meetings that has ever taken place in New York in glorification of the assassin of M. de Plehve,' and added: 'The audience was largely composed of revolutionists and anarchists, and was organised by the New York branch of the United Russia Revolutionist Organisations. Speeches were made by agitators, who worked their audience into a frenzy of enthusiasm by their praise of the man who had

murdered the Russian Minister.' It is a remarkable comment upon the twentieth century that the American people think it consistent with the duties of a civilised nation to permit such an exhibition as this. To match it on a smaller scale from our own country I may quote the interview with Mr. Carl Joubert, published the morning after the assassination by the London *Daily Express*, in which the following passage occurs:

"'Bobrikoff has gone, Plehve has gone. You ask me who will be next?'

"Mr. Joubert, with a troubled face, leaned forward in his chair. 'I dare not give you the answer that I fear.'"

Now Mr. Norman is a British Member of Parliament, representing a constituency of a liberty-loving people, and yet he advocates the suppression of free speech. Had he known more of the Constitution of the United States he would not have suggested that the American people ought not to permit a public meeting to be held. The fact that Mr. Norman objects to the nature of the discussion and the tone of the meeting is hardly sufficient cause for the muzzling of the whole of America and the British Press for printing reports of the meeting, or for publishing interviews with private individuals. If Mr. Norman would go to Russia—not as a Cook's tourist, but permanently—he would find in that country the state of affairs which he desires to see introduced into America and Great Britain. There

he could bask in the sunshine of autocracy, sheltered from the cold blasts of public opinion by the restrictions of the censor and the secret police.

As regards the meeting in New York which has scandalised Mr. Norman it must not be forgotten, as I have already pointed out, that the people of Russia are fighting the anarchy which prevails under autocracy with its own weapons. If de Plehve had not ruthlessly hounded to death thousands of innocent people with the approval and sanction of Nicholas Alexandrovitch, he would not have met his fate at the hands of the people of Russia. The crime which deprived him of his life was probably the means of averting years of persecution and bloodshed by his agency. I do not say that the end justifies the means; but it is an extenuating circumstance which must be taken into account. De Plehve's death was not an act of vengeance, but an act of prevention. The meeting which was held in New York was composed of men who, in all probability, had been driven out of Russia by the policy of persecution in which de Plehve persisted. I will undertake to say that a large proportion of them could show the scars of the Cossack's knout on their bodies. They had been driven from their homes by tyranny and oppression; are they then to be condemned as beyond the pale of humanity because they rejoice when the malign influence which ruined their lives is powerless for further mischief? Mr. Norman sees fit to class me with them "on a

smaller scale." I am much obliged to Mr. Norman. I am not sure that, on the whole, I do not prefer to be classed with those who are striving, however mistakenly, in the cause of liberty, than with those in the most respectable circles who are its opponents.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SOUL OF RUSSIA

To describe the true inwardness of Russia is a theme which well might give pause to the ablest pen; and a new volume might be begun where this is ending. Nevertheless, in the full consciousness of my own incompetence for the task, I set pen to paper to touch briefly some of the chords in the great soul of Russia which have awakened responsive echoes in mine. So, away with Autocracy and Bureaucracy, and bitter strife! And let me once more be a tramp in the vast expanse of Russia, with the life of her people stirring like a breeze in field and forest and hamlet, whispering thoughts which are not our thoughts, and suggesting ideals foreign to our nature.

For I have been a tramp in Russia—a *bradjaga* as they call it—untrammelled by social obligations and the cares of domicile, wandering in town or country at will, and making friends or foes of the companions of the hour. In some particulars I differed from the country-born *bradjaga*; for, whereas he has no passport, no money, and very little clothing, I carried a pretentious-looking docu-

ment with a heavy seal, which entitled me to be at large in Russia subject to the usual restrictions. I possessed a coat or two more than my fellow tramps and I had an account with the Crédit Lyonnais which would have filled them with disgust. Now the Russian *bradjaga* differs from the British tramp. In the first place he really does tramp, having no Green Park in which to sprawl on the grass, and watch through the railings the rest of the world tramp past him. Then, again, he is never a University man. But, for the rest, there is not much to choose between them. The tramping disposition is the same all the world over. The Road calls to her sons with irresistible appeal, they must go back to her though fortune beckons them away. And so I would return to the well-known roads of Russia, and breathe the life which stirs on every side.

Listen to the language which they speak! The wild, barbaric dialects of the Slav, so rich in pathos and sweetness tersely expressed, in whispering sibillants and caressing undertones. A language for love, if love be the lay. But if hate—then there are rasping gutturals and long-drawn consonants to accentuate the curse. Yet most of all it is the language of misery and bitterness. No artifice of words is needed to express the sorrows of the heart, the commonest moujik can tell his griefs in the wringing eloquence of a simple sentence. Whence did they come, and who was the mother of these Slavonic languages? I cannot say; but this I

know, that they have borrowed from every tongue. East and West have contributed to their vocabulary. Hebrew and Turk have lent them words, and even from China and Japan they have taken what they wanted.

Gesture is an important feature in Russian conversation, as it is with the French and Turks and Jews. The Frenchman emphasises his words with his head, shoulders and arms; the Turk with his right hand. The Russian and the Jew are alike in their gesticulations, throwing as it were the words at their hearers from between the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. The Jew adopts this mode of gesticulation in his studies of the Talmud with a fellow student; at other times he will use both his hands with open palms. This eloquence of the hand is sometimes almost as expressive as words themselves.

There is no language to me which can compare with the Russian for wealth of expression both in the spoken and written words. The language of Lomonosoff, Dershavin, Pushkin, Gogol, Turgenieff, and Tolstoy I prefer to those of Bacon, Descartes, Goethe, or even Tasso. Read in the origninal Russian the works of Gogol, Turgenieff, and Tolstoy are unsurpassed in my opinion; and I have yet to find a language which for passion and fire, for love and hatred, can rival Pushkin's verse. He gives us the beauty and sweetness of the lily and the despair of damnation.

The soul of a nation finds expression in its language, in its music, and in its literature. The undercurrent of sadness which flows through the Slavonic languages, and the stifled, hopeless misery of their literature are a true index of the national character. And therefore, as we tramp through the crowded streets of the town out into the country beyond, where the voices of the peasants at work in the fields are borne to us on the breeze, we glean an impression of sadness, until a merry peal of laughter mocks us with its glaring contrast. And then we remember that it takes very little to make the moujik happy.

Where in the wide world can we find a more long-suffering, patient, good-natured fellow than this Russian moujik, whose laughter has jarred upon the melancholy train of our thoughts? He is the prototype of the Russian nation and the outcome of centuries of oppression. Suffering is to him a necessity of existence. He believes in it, and inflicts it on those who are dependent upon him for their own good. He will inflict it upon himself, if there is no one to make him suffer, which is not often the case. As a corrective to the normal state of misery in which he exists he is endowed with a quaint sense of humour which readily provokes him to mirth. He hates the popes of the Orthodox Church with fearful hate, mingled with superstitious dread of the powers, temporal and spiritual, of which they are possessed. His natural disposition is to

drink vodka, tchisschinna, or tea, and to sing from morning to night.

Russia would cease to be Russia if her folk-songs were taken away from her. But the songs which all Russia sings are not the happy ballads which the vineyards of the sunny South provoke. They are rather the drifting minor melodies of the vast level plains and sombre forests and of the mighty rivers flowing relentlessly to the sea. They are sung to drown the perpetual wail of misery which sighs through the land from end to end. They are sung as a balm of forgetfulness, and as a palliative to pain. They are sung in the snow-bound hamlet where, huddled upon the heated oven, the moujik and his family while away the dreary winter evenings. They are sung by the soldiers on the march, though their backs are galled and their feet swollen. They are sung in the reek of battle, and by the camp-fire whilst the iron kettle simmers above the flames. They are sung in the blacksmith's forge and at the carpenter's bench. For Russia is a land of song, and the cry of her heart, which she may not express in words, goes to heaven in the plaintive burden of her melodies.

As an instance of the musical genius of Russia I will relate a personal experience of my own. In a town in Western Russia there was a tailor's shop where I used sometimes to go for a suit of clothes. I called there one day to try on a coat which the tailor was making for me. Now the master-tailor

was his own cutter, and whilst he was chalking fantastic lines upon the cloth he was singing a song which haunts me to this day. I listened in admiration; but I do not think that he was even conscious of my presence; for, presently, he went out of the room, and I was left with his assistants, who were sitting cross-legged on a long bench sewing industriously. But as soon as the master-tailor left the workroom, one of the assistants began to sing, and the others joined in. It was a beautiful and, indeed, a remarkable performance, for those Jewish tailors were singing in perfect tune, time, and harmony like a trained quartet. Needless to say, I did not disturb them; but when they had finished I asked what manner of song it was. They answered that it was "Koll Needrei" as Rasovsky sang it. Now Rasovsky was celebrated throughout Russia as a singer. Like many great Russian singers he had his own trained quartet, who supplied a harmonised vocal accompaniment to his songs, of which the "Koll Needrei" was one of the most famous. The tailors, sitting at their work, had given a wonderful imitation of Rasovsky and his quartet, and I could not understand how it was possible for untrained voices to accomplish what they had done. But when I asked them if they could read music, they laughed, and thanked God that they knew how to read and write their mother-tongue, which was Hebrew; but never an hour's instruction in music had they received.

I could hardly believe it, and questioned them further. But they adhered to their statements. They had never learnt music, but they had, of course, frequently heard Rasovsky sing in the synagogue, and they had acquired by ear the "Koll Needrei" in all its parts.

"It is a song that suits our mood," one of them explained. "It is not a happy song."

So this was the explanation. These poor tailors, whose existence was one long struggle, for whom tears and misery and the slavery of unending labour made up the measure of their days, were taught and trained by their hearts to sing. I asked them to sing to me again, if they knew any other songs, and they broke at once into a song from *Il Troubadour*, which they rendered in perfect harmony, though I cannot say where they had heard it.

I left the dingy tailor's shop with a sad heart; for I realised that the songs which they sang were as the song of the nightingale, who only sings in pain. For Misery is the great school of music in Russia, and Affliction, rod in hand, is the chief musical director and conductor. At this academy all must learn to sing, aristocrat, moujik, and Jew alike; and they are taught to sing from the heart.

Let me transport the reader from the Jewish tailor's shop to the banks of the Volga. The camp fire is burning low, and the smouldering embers glow in the fading twilight; whilst I stand by the

riverside and try to inveigle the unwary fish with rod and line. Below me, a gang of *Strugovtchiks* are preparing to float their raft of timber down the Volga; the trunks are securely lashed, and all is ready to cast off from the bank. As they push out into the stream one starts a song, and it is taken up by his comrades. The intense melancholy of the refrain is heightened by the lapping river, which murmurs an accompaniment to the song. I listen for the words, for surely the heartrending pathos of the air must be inspired by words as sad; but they are simple and homely—

> "Whilst we are on the Mother Volga
> Our thoughts are with our friends at home."

The raft drifts into the gathering darkness, but the voices of the *Strugovtchiks* are borne to me distinctly on the bosom of the river. My eyes are wet, the camp fire has burned itself out, the rod has fallen from my hands, and, for all I know or care, it may be drifting down the river in the wake of the raft. The voices are becoming fainter, and as I stand gazing up into the darkening sky, straining my ears to catch the last notes of the melody, the evening star glimmers faintly in the heavens above —and the song of the *Strugovtchiks* on the Volga is ringing in my ears as I write.

Therefore, I say, let the cultured musician rave over the ready-made songs of professional vocalists, with their fantastic affectations and artificial

mannerisms; but give me the Jewish tailors singing on their bench the mournful strains of "Koll Needrei," or the songs of the *Strugovtchiks* on the rafts on the placid stream of the Volga. A thousand times I prefer them, though I be classed as a Philistine for my preference. For these are songs sung from the heart, such as only the great master Misery can teach his pupils.

The note of sadness which rings through every phase of Russian life is the private affair of the Russian people. It resounds in their language, in their literature, in their songs, because the soul of the nation has no other means of expression. But "officially" Russia poses before the world as a great and prosperous country, with a civilising mission. The gulf which separates the official view of Russia's destiny from the ideals and aspirations of the people is so great that patriotism, as we understand it, is unknown in Russia. On one side of the gulf are the governing classes, who are the mouthpiece of the country to the rest of the world; on the other are the struggling masses of the people, who cry in vain for a drop of the water of liberty. But in the place of patriotism there is a consuming home-love in the heart of the people which chains them to the soil in spite of tyranny and oppression.

In this respect the people of Russia present the greatest contrast to the people of our own country. The British subject will seldom change his nation-

ality; with him the boast that he is a citizen of the British Empire takes precedence of all other considerations, and he will often flaunt it offensively in the face of foreigners. Yet he will emigrate to any corner of the world, and make his home there, whether it be a British colony or a foreign land. He will still retain his nationality, and he will come willingly to the assistance of his country if he is needed; but his birthplace is practically forgotten. He may revisit it in twenty or thirty years time, but he does so more from a feeling of curiosity than any other sentiment. His home is where he has settled and married and brought up his children.

The Russian, on the other hand, will only quit his home for the purpose of escaping from extreme tyranny and oppression. But so great is the home-love in Russia that even the bitterness and injustice of autocracy are suffered with patience, so long as they can be endured "at home." Ask a well-to-do Russian why he does not leave Russia and settle in a free country, and he will reply: "Oh, well, I would rather suffer in my own home, and among my own people, and speaking my own language. It may be hell, but it is home too." If it were not for this devotion to the "hallowed limits" of home, and for the doctrine of fatalism which pervades all classes in Russia, there would be a general exodus from the country. No man has ever emigrated from Russia who does not long to return to the poverty-

stricken village he calls "home." Time does not obliterate his longing nor deaden his love for his birthplace, and the land of his adoption will never be home for him. Be he Jew or Lithuanian, Lett or true Russian, the district from which he came is his home for all time.

It is a mistake to suppose that the Russian immigrant who flies to our shores in the darkness of the night, pursued by the furies of hell, and finds with us an asylum and freedom from persecution, becomes forthwith a happy and contented man. Never speak to him of happiness so long as he is debarred from returning to the spot where his fathers lie buried, and where he was born. To the Russian Jew there is not the same sweetness and enthusiasm in the study of the Mishna in a strange land. He longs for the little Beth Hamedrosh of the wretched town from which he was driven by persecution and affliction.

If Russia to-day or to-morrow became a Constitutional country—and the contingency is a very probable one, if not to-morrow, then in the near future—there would be such an influx of immigration into the country that the railways and steamers would be taxed to their utmost limits to cope with it. There would be a great home-coming of those who have fled or have been driven out of their country, such as the world has never seen before. There would no longer be any necessity for the legislatures of Europe to pass measures to exclude from their

borders destitute aliens who only ask for an asylum and to be allowed to live. We in England should be spared the pains of passing the Bill which the Government are to lay before Parliament in the coming Session, and thereby preserve intact our reputation as a land of freedom. The British working man would be deprived of his best grievance, and would be faced by the fact that there is plenty of work for him and no foreign competition—if he will only do it. He will not even have time to join with his fellow labourers in demonstrations in Hyde Park with banners and flags and carriages full of labour representatives and members of Parliament.

When Russia gets her Constitution all these matters will arrange themselves—"We shall see!" as Marshal Oyama said when it was suggested to him that it would be impossible for Japan to defeat a nation as mighty as Russia.

It is impossible in writing of the soul of Russia to pass over without reference the fatalism which characterises the national temperament. But so much has been written on this subject lately that I hesitate to embark upon it. There is no doubt that this Oriental doctrine of fatalism enervates every class of society. Nothing matters in Russia, and therefore everything is allowed to slide. That has been the rule for hundreds of years until it has become an ingrained principle, which is a great factor in the submission of the people to the yoke of

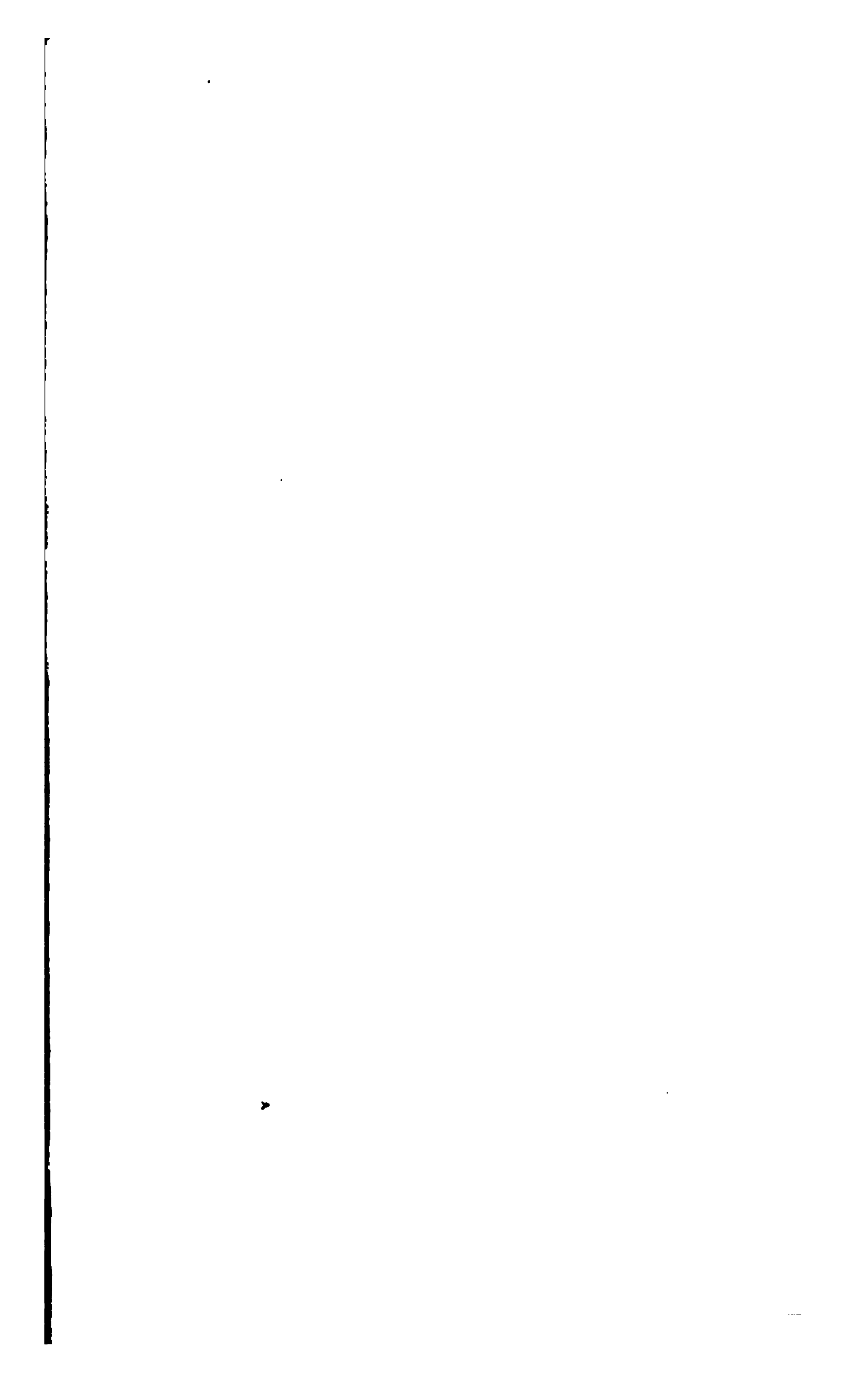
autocracy. But with the new era which is dawning in Russia there will be the beginning of a change in the national character. Men will soon come to see that there are things which matter when they have a voice in the management of them. They will realise that what could not be helped under the old *régime*, they themselves have the power to help in the new. And so with freedom will come a conception of the responsibilities of life, and the doctrine of fatalism will gradually disappear.

The future which lies before Russia is beyond computation, for there is nothing in the world which Russia has not got. Her climate surpasses that of America, Italy or Switzerland. Her resources are as yet almost untouched. The vast wealth of minerals which lie safely hidden in the bosom of Mother Earth is inexhaustible, and it only awaits the ingenuity of man to go and take it. Australia, Africa and California will pale before the marvellous treasures of Russia. The gold as yet untouched in Siberia alone is beyond estimation. Russia can satisfy the longings of the most avaricious fortune-hunters, and there will be room for all who care to go. But first Liberty must arise and assert her cause. She is already arming herself to strike relentlessly at the tyranny which has denied her a footing on Russian soil. She will no longer be denied; and the world will soon be called upon to witness her struggle with the powers of darkness. And I who have been a tramp for years on the

interminable roads and by the mighty waterways of Russia, who have listened to the anguish of her cry, and to the long-drawn sadness of her melodies, take off my hat to Liberty, and exclaim with Dryden—

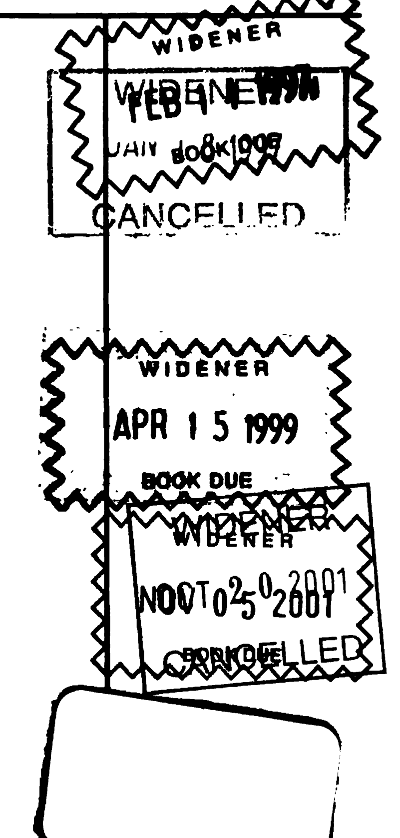
"Oh, give me liberty! for even were Paradise my prison, still I should long to leap the crystal walls."

Printed by Ballantyne, Hanson & Co.
London & Edinburgh



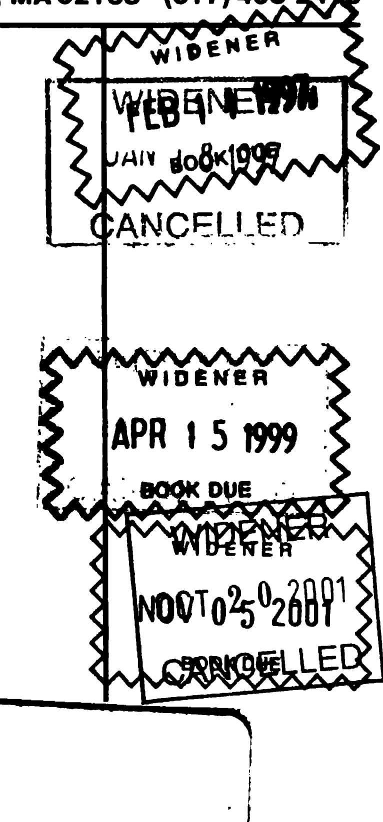





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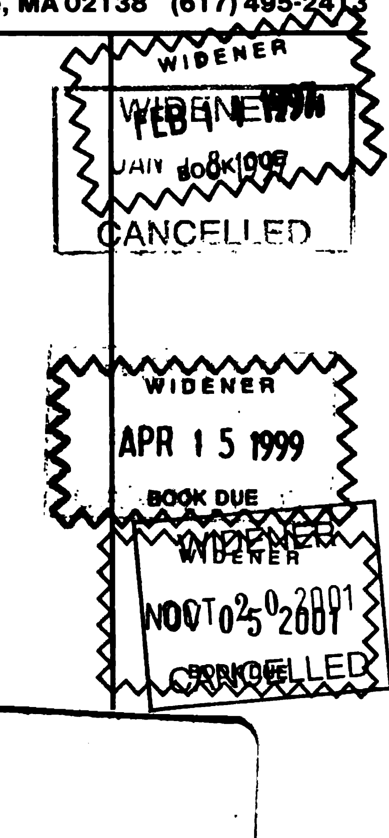



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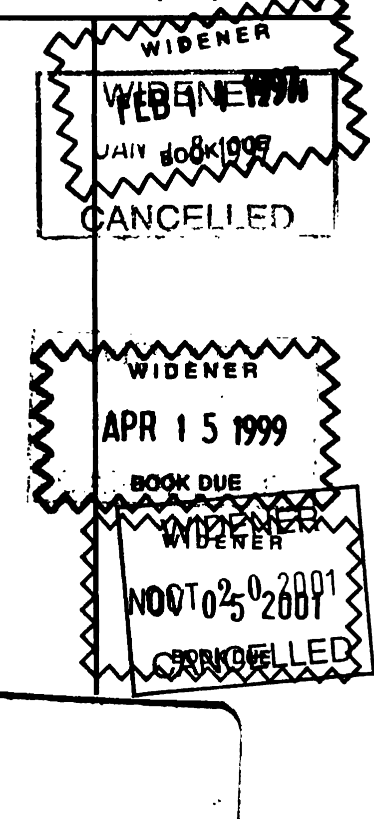

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